

Written Comments

From: Tom Karvonen [mailto:karvonens@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 9:25 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I almost gagged when I read where the mayor wondered if the festival had outlived its usefulness. 300,000 people show up! A lot of mayors would like to have that problem in their cities.

Yesterday's article was more reassuring. Although I am not sure about four smaller festivals, the other ideas sound worth considering.

As a side note, the one type of festival that Asheville is lacking is a true blues (not bluegrass) festival. We lived in Dayton OH for a while and every year there were three of them within a 30-minute drive.

Thank you for considering my views on this matter.

Tom Karvonen
karvonens@bellsouth.net

From: wncsport@aol.com [mailto:wncsport@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2007 4:07 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov; jandavis@main.nc.us

Feel free to forward to anyone needed. Thank you.

I was wanting to inquire about the Bele Chere forum at the Civic Center Banquet Hall.

Since the meeting is going to be at the Civic Center, may I ask if a topic for discussion will be having activities AT the Civic Center during Bele Chere?

I wondered why it could not be utilized more. If anything, a place to cool off and have people relax a little during the day.

UpFront Management Sports did a basketball tournament once in conjunction with the Asheville Altitude at the Civic Center, maybe the City could consider sponsoring a basketball tournament during the event?

I was looking to rent a facility out (not the Civic Center) to start a four on four adult basketball league (www.4mba.net) and I could help set such a tournament up during Bele Chere.

Councilman Davis did suggest bringing in sports tournaments to the Civic Center as an objective of his, according to the Asheville Tribune's story on each Council member's objectives for this year.

Good luck to you during your forum. Hope I can be there.

Thank you.
Dennis Justice, President
Justice Sports...Sports for All...

From: Whitney Orr [mailto:fynic@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 7:44 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

NOOOOOOO! Please don't let them talk about closing down Bele Chere any more. I am an Asheville local; born and raised for the past 31 years. I take off the whole weekend at the end of July every year and I love love love it. Asheville will have at least one very sad resident on its hands if Bele Chere ends, and I suspect many more than myself will miss it.

Unfortunately I cannot attend the meeting, but please pass on my sentiments. Thank you.

Whitney Orr

Weighing in on Bele Chere:

Kudos to Mayor Bellamy for recognizing that it may be time to revamp BC. AMEN! In my view it has become more of an opportunity for out of town vendors and bands to make money than the uniquely-Asheville festival that it was originally. I agree with Mr. Butner that it is no longer a tool for promoting downtown.

I am not sure what I would suggest to "improve" other than reducing the number of "big names" (that command big salaries) but it seems that by having only 1 gated event this year you are trying to do this.

AS for discontinuing it--such a move would be too abrupt but if 2007 is tweaked with an eye to a having a smaller scope and featuring more local musical talent, you will certainly have a clearer idea of whether or not to scrap or save for 2008.

My husband--Mr Curmudgeon says, "I don't care what they do as long as I have to go"--but its economic impact can't be ignored.

Good luck!! --Wendy Bell

From: VisVoices@aol.com [mailto:VisVoices@aol.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 7:01 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Cher

Though I am unable to attend the forum due to teaching commitments, I did want to add my opinion about Belle Cher.

Most of the people I know avoid going, and leave town if possible. It is my understanding that Belle Cher does even make money for the city. Local businesses suffer when streets are shut down and their services can not be accessed by those of us who use them. The amount of alcohol consumed makes for some very unpleasant encounters and the craft and art booths are mostly from outside our town.

I do not support continuiong Belle Cher

"Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." - Dr. Seuss

From: Tina Wolfe [mailto:lobomago@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 10:39 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I will be unable to attend the public forum on Bele Chere as I am currently out of the country and will not be back in time.

We live downtown and enjoy it most of the year. We don't mind the noise, the crowds or the music. What we do mind is the fact that for the three days of Bele Chere and other festivals, our dogs (three of them) are suddenly prohibited from being downtown. Is it even legal to prohibit them?

There must be some way to accomodate the presence of dogs who live downtown. (Perhaps with proof of residency?) So that we are not threatened by police when they see us walking the dogs. On past encounters we have not had success with explaining our situation.

What would you suggest? I am sure that you realize that it is not realistic to ask them to hold their "business" until the festival is over and putting them in the car and taking them elsewhere everytime they need to go is also beyond incovenience (as one of them is 12 years old).

Warm regards,

Tina Wolfe
lobomago@gmail.com

From: Thomas Hall [mailto:thomashall12@charter.net]
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2007 5:11 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: bele chere input

I'm responding about the article in the Citizen-Times on Jan. 20 about public input concerning Bele Chere.I want to express how much I have missed the dance stage.I know there is a stage on Biltmore referred to as the dance stage,what I miss is the dance stage of years pass.The one with bands people could couple dance to,with an area to dance not just stand and watch.

At different festival I attend there are stages for danceing,plywood dance floors,fans to move the air and some times tents covering them.Many people travel long distances for these stages,it seems ashamed that Belr Chere could'nt try to at least provide a dance stage for dancers,with bands that play for dancers.I feel it would be a great addition to a already great festival

I moved to Asheville ten years ago and have work downtown on Wall St.for ten years also.Over those ten years I have attend nine Bele Chere festivals.I also have traveled to attend many other city festivals around the southeast,it's my opinion City Stages in Bimingham Ala. has one of the best ran dance stages around,if you would like somthing to model this would be a good place to look.Thier dance stage is called the Dance Depot.

I know there are great numbers of people that would enjoy a stage for couple danceing.There are so many different styles of music that would work,Blues,Latin,Zydeco,Swing,Country,Cajun,Beach.I feel there are also many people in this area that would be willing to help do this if they were needed.

From: terry peterson [mailto:twp@beverly-hanks.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 8:47 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Comments on Belle Chere

My wife and I have lived here for over eleven years. During our first few years we attended Belle Chere and enjoyed some aspects of it. We then reached a point where we chose not to attend for a few years as it seemed the direction

of the event was losing focus. Now for the past several years we cannot get out of town fast enough during that weekend. There appears to be zero focus to the event. Nothing but a huge cluster of events with an apparent objective to be something to everyone.....which never works. I feel what it has become has negatively affected the image of Asheville. Make it a classy affair (rather than dumpy) focused upon excellent food, art and music and nothing else. This would be consistent with the form of culture this city is known for. I have heard the comment that it has become "the road kill of street festivals." Do we really want this event to mirror some type of survival format?

Terry Peterson

From: Sylvia Edgar [mailto:sylviae@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 2:04 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere music suggestion

I'm unable to attend the public forum, so would like to submit my suggestion this way, if you don't mind:

Idea for Highlighting Local Bands at Belle Chere:

Past Letters to the Editor of the AC-T have mentioned the lack of opportunity for local bands at Belle Chere. An idea would be to designate one site, as the band stand on Lexington Ave, as the "local band site".

A "local band site" would enable more local bands to participate, giving them much needed exposure.

It would also let us locals who aren't so familiar with the local band scene an opportunity to listen to them by knowing in advance where they are.

Sylvia Edgar
sylviae@earthlink.net

From: Steve Busey [mailto:sbusey@wcqs.org]
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 9:43 AM
To: 'don rawson'
Cc: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov; 'Melissa Porter'; Sandra Travis; 'Scott Hetrick'; 'Cristin Corder'; 'Debi Smith'
Subject: RE: Bele Chere Public Forum

Don,
Thank you for your valuable input. I am copying this to Communications Coordinator for the City of Asheville Lauren Bradley, the staff members in the Festivals Division and the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Some of the topics you mentioned were also brought up by other citizens. The public has until February 8th to submit input to Lauren Bradley. The ideas will be compiled and discussed at the Bele Chere Board of Directors retreat on February 10th.

I believe the ideas are also going to be compiled and posted on the City of Asheville website.

Thank you again for your input.

Regards,

Steve Busey
Corporate Support / Program Underwriting
WCQS - WFQS - WYQS
73 Broadway
Asheville, NC 28801
ph: 828.253.6875

fx: 828.253.6700

-----Original Message-----

From: don rawson [mailto:pineal9@yahoo.com]

Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 6:19 PM

To: Steve Busey

Subject: Re: Bele Chere Public Forum

Thank you for the invitation to the Bele Chere forum but I was unable to attend- I'm sure many concerns/suggestions were made but I would only ask is Bele Chere a local festival or is it a money making venture for the City of Asheville? I ask because the two ideas are not always congruent with each other- as an entertainer who has played there and a resident of Asheville who has attended it for entertainment purposes, these are my observations:

- 1) Local microbreweries are not allowed to sell great beer brewed in WNC. Budweiser (yuck) products are exclusively sold. Can Budweiser (no pun intended) and sell Asheville area microbrewed beers.
- 2) Local merchants, artists and crafts vendors are far outnumbered by "out of towners" vendors selling merchandise in front of Asheville stores that are going out of business. Irony eh?
- 3) With the exception of one or two headliners, Bele Chere should book local bands exclusively. The reason Bele Chere lost money with gated paying concerts is because nobody will pay to enter the gated area when they can simply hang around outside the fence and listen to music for free. Bele Chere used to be advertised as the largset free music festival in the Southeast. Is this still the case?
- 4) Sell alcohol on Sundays. Period. Unless Prohibition has been activated again there is no reason not to. Those who don't drink don't have to and more revenue is generated.

In short, it would seem that keeping with "local arts" only ideals cannot co-exist with corporate sponsorship which does not benefit Asheville. Sooner or later a decision has to be made- kudos on the Cherokee security staff by the way- it's good to see the real natives given the opportunity to be a part of our festival- I also loved the dog show- Thank you for allowing my input

From: Michael [mailto:mc@michaelcarson.name]

Sent: Friday, January 26, 2007 12:30 PM

To: stravis@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: Michael Carson confirmation and volunteer

Sandra

Thanks for the e-vite. I look forward to attending your forum. During my tenure as General Manager of the French Broad Brewery I have attended and studied all of the local & regional Festivals and observed many aspects with a view to enhancements. I was responsible for booking bands for the brewery and have booked over 300 evenings of live music and evaluated 150+- local regional and international bands. I would be happy to assist you in this effort as well as in any other community input roles as required. I am a fan of Asheville and Bele Chere and care about its continued success.

Michael Carson

Phone 828-400-3430

From: samogon1@juno.com [mailto:samogon1@juno.com]

Sent: Saturday, January 20, 2007 12:05 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: Bele Chere

Hello,

I've been a volunteer for many years except for the past 2. First, you need to get rid of the paid events. To me, that is not Bele Chere. Second, I feel that the treatment of Vols. has gone way down hill. You say that without us it couldn't be done. At volunteer HQ you have vending machine snacks for us but at the main HQ for the supervisors there are catered stuff. A few years ago I got off of my shift and went to vol hq on market st. to get some water and it was closed. It seems that all the good jobs are given to people who know someone. What happened to all of the hospitality jobs? On my last year for volunteering I asked for a job where I can work with my girlfriend and was promised a job so that we could but when we got there we were split up. What happened to the Vol party?

From: Sage Linden [mailto:culturalcreativevision@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2007 8:46 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I would just like to see a lot more local vendors and a minority of corporate vendors at the Bele Chere festival.
Thanks for asking for input!

Sage Linden

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere Feedback

I got an email about feedback on Belle Chere. I live in Clemson, SC so am not sure you are looking for the feedback from me. I think I was on the list because I am a visual artist who was interested in showing at the festival but after reading reviews and talking to my fellow artist decided against showing at the festival.

The feedback was the hours are too long, all the people are there mainly for the music and there is too much alcohol to risk your artwork. There were also reports of art being stolen or damaged when left overnight. Again not sure you were looking for my input but this the feedback that some in the professional visual arts community is giving to their peers.

Thank you,

Robin Anne Cooper
<<http://www.robinannecooper.com>>
art@robinannecooper.com
864.654.2068
864.506.6116

From: RGollberg@aol.com [mailto:RGollberg@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 1:12 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

Dear Ms. Porter -

I am sorry I can not attend the public forum announced in the AC-T this am. We have a prior engagement so I would like to express my thoughts via your email.

I want Bele Chere to stay in Downtown Asheville.

Even if it does not totally pay all the expenses, such as the \$76,000 which seems a small % of the \$12M or the ripple effect \$23 M, it is an overall benefit to our community and the perception of the community from outside.

I have gone to most of the Bele Chere festivals over the 34 years we have lived here. I have fun tasting the different foods, buying and viewing the selection of crafts, and listening to all kinds of music, and watching the variety of folk visiting our town. I have not attended the pay for music events as they are not performers that I know about. It seems the downtown vendors can endure the 3 day inconvenience as evidenced by the number who now put booths out on the street. I have bought things there but do not know the statistics about how many others do. I was so sorry to see the City loose the Honda Hoot and the Harley Hogs. They may not be my passion but they were interesting and brought variety to the things we can see and do in our town. I was also sorry to see the Thanksgiving Parade diminish in quality and quantity this year, whatever the reason is. It was one more thing that brought me downtown for a tradition. Just being there with the variety of people is a pleasure.

Please do not cancel Bele Chere. It is a lot of work, requires many volunteers and a lot of city support in police and clean-up but I think the larger picture of the people who come and come back later, and the variety of experiences it provides Ashevilleians makes it an event that continues to meet its overall purposes.

Sincerely, Maralee Gollberg

300 N.Griffing Blvd., Asheville, 28804

From: prc555c [mailto:prc555c@bellsouth.net]

Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2007 6:10 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: Bele Chere

I enjoy it but feel it's much too large for Asheville and way too noisy. Limit the number of booths and bandstands and get back to the way it used to be.

Many businesses and restaurants close their doors because there are too many people....often drunk and uncontrolled.

Clayton Ludeman, Oxford Place on Biltmore Ave.

From: PdKingNC@aol.com [mailto:PdKingNC@aol.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 2:41 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: More Fitness Challenges at Belle Chere

I'd like to see more fitness challenges at Belle Chere:

Ask the Marines to put on a Marine Corp fitness challenge: Pull ups, crunches & 3 mile run. Post the results on a board by age and gender so people can challenge each other.

Ask the AFD to put on a fire department obstacle course challenge. Post the results by age and gender.

Ask the YMCA or YWCA to put on a fitness challenge/test. Maybe a 12 minute run/walk challenge ala Dr. Cooper's Aerobics program. Might be better to do it at the UNCA track.

Ask some of the local fitness clubs to set up fitness challenges: pushups, chin-ups, crunches or maybe even weight lifting. A four minute challenge with dumbbells is pretty easy to run: Using 10, 12, 15, 20 or 25 pound dumbbells: From a standing position, how many times can the person raise the dumbbells over their head, back down to their sides, down to their shins and then back up to their thighs? Looks easy, but is pretty tough. An even tougher one is to use one 30 or 35 pound dumbbell and take it from the ground to overhead as many times as possible in 4 minutes.

A rope climb would be interesting.

I believe there is a President's Physical Fitness challenge that could be used.

If these were done each year, it might motivate people to get in shape for them.

Thanks!
Paul King
Asheville, NC

From: noman4me@charter.net [mailto:noman4me@charter.net]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 9:37 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: BELE CHERE

WHY IS THE BELE CHERE FESTIVAL SUCH A DRUNKEN AFFAIR. AS A NEWCOMER TO THIS AREA I WAS SHOCKED AT THE RAMPANT DRINKING ON THE STREETS AND THE BUDWEISER TRUCK ON JUST ABOUT EVERY CORNER. IS ASHEVILLE SUPPORTING BUDWEISER. I AM NOT AGAINST DRINKING, AS I LIKE TO HAVE ONE MYSELF ON OCCASIONS. THIS DRUNKEN FESTIVAL IS WORSE THAN THE ST PATRICKS DAY PARADE IN NEW YORK CITY.

IN CONTRAST, THE GOOMBAY FESTIVAL IS A DELIGHTFUL ONE. WHY CANT YOU BASE BELE CHERE ON THE WAY THIS ONE IS RUN.

PAT. NORMAN

From: Nancy Patterson [mailto:nancy@sysadmin-inc.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 7:05 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I am writing to comment on Bele Chere since I won't be able to attend tomorrow night's meeting.

I have been a resident of Asheville for 21 years. During that time I have seen the changes in the Bele Chere festival and I have to say, I do not think it has changed for the better. When I first went to Bele Chere it was a smaller, more community oriented festival, where I could go and see neighbors and friends as I enjoyed local music and performances. It wasn't so big that walking from one end to the other took twenty minutes and you didn't have to push your way through throngs of people packed like sardines in the city streets. Frankly, I have avoided Bele Chere for the last 10 years altogether, frequently leaving town for the weekend. I find Goombay much more enjoyable because when I go, I see people I know from the community. It has a more laid-back and relaxed feel about it than Bele Chere does.

Nancy Patterson
Asheville, NC

From: Mike Pires :: 4yourwebsite [mailto:WebDesignsThatWork@4yourwebsite.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 5:07 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere Comments

I believe that the biggest change needed is to return to having Bele Chere be all about promoting LOCAL artists and performers. Having a single national headliner act is a good addition, but all other talent should be local. Bele Chere should be all about promoting local businesses and artists and participation in it should be affordable for them.

-----Original Message-----

From: kathy linville [mailto:kslin321@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2007 3:00 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I am a downtown resident (32 Broadway) and would just like to make a comment regarding Bele Chere. First, I think it is a wonderful festival for a city the size of Asheville. My comment is on trash disposal during the festival. Last year there were a few yellow trash cans around Pack Square for the purpose of recycling. I only knew that was the purpose of these cans because I read it in AC-T. As a visitor, I would not have known. This was a commendable beginning, but as a city that prides itself on being green, we should do much better. The main recyclables seem to be plastic water bottles and aluminum cans. I would like to see recycling cans all around the festival area, not just around Pack Square. Trash cans around the stage areas were literally overflowing with these recyclables. They also need to be clearly marked as to what recyclables can be placed in them. In other words, we need to make it easier and clearer for folks to recycle. Thanks

From: Marv Rosen [mailto:marv@ppseap.com]

Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 11:53 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I'm not at all familiar with the economics and costs of Bele Chere or how the city recoups any tax dollars. If Bele Chere generates enough \$\$ it should be self sufficient.

The City should not incur any losses.

I would like to see the street vendors - not the existing downtown stores - contribute a small percentage of their gross revenues to offset any costs the city incurs (public works, sanitation, police & fire, etceteras.)

Marv Rosen
Jackson Building

From: m.sharon greene [mailto:msg2256@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2007 7:16 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Bele chere has gotten away from what it was. It used to provide entertainment for the local people. It was a place that local folk would see others during the festival. It was the place to be in the late eighties.

The prices are too high! and locals either leave for the weekend due to the people and the traffic.

Also you do not include the people of color with your entertainment. Years ago you had acts like the Staple Singers, War, Ohio Players, Lucky Dube. You freeze out african-americans. Lately your entertainment consisted of country western, southern rock. There might be a gospel singer for "us" on Sunday. (Dottie Peoples) If you did include a black person to perform it would be a black folk singer, or Celtic black singer. If you did have a person of color it was the local band Westsound.

Your concerts that was a price did not include anyone of color. Therefore we became invisible.

From: M. T. Buket [mailto:spinalsounds@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, February 05, 2007 11:56 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I have an idea- an observation really- which I believe encompasses everything Asheville, and would work well with the concept of Bele Chere. I offer it freely, as I believe no one owns it. It is more giving witness to some thing happening through out the city, and pointing it out for the sake of a more conscious approach to grasping the potential of a rich arts community striving to establish its own unique identity. It comes equipped with a theme, a universal theme- meaning none would be offended- a series of art, music concepts (concept albums) which could include as many as sixty local acts, and provide another source of revenue for Bele Chere, benefiting not only the budget of the festival, the local artists involved as well. There is a movie, performance art, books, an endless amount of art to be created by the community at large, all potentially monitored/witnessed in co-creation with the community via URTV and the Internet, all designed to promote every aspect of the community.

What I have is the time lines, cover art, concepts, stage and set designs, scripts- everything necessary to provide the framework for the body of a multi-media theatrical production to be created by the members of a community, further demonstrating Ashevilles ability to work together through diversity. With the frame work the community would create a seamless set of music featuring all of the region wishes to offer, set to the backdrop of a multimedia production which could highlight whatever the city decides to say.

I believe that a project like that could only happen in an environment such as Asheville, and it was the city itself which inspired it. Bele Chere is already an event unlike any other, and as the members of the community have come together, spoken, and asked for something more thematic, focusing on the local flavor of Asheville, I feel compelled to offer what I have observed. If it were the main stage performance, working with the promotional efforts provided by our local acts, our local television and radio, and our vast array of periodicals, the audience would surely be pleased. 300,000 people will attend no matter who plays the main stage. If the commission decided to go forward with this project, it would provide a means to draw national attention to something unique, original, and something which is truly Asheville.

It is also designed to potentially take a crew on the road over the next year, and set up and perform similar events in other cities, sharing, creating, establishing, and demonstrating what creative arts communities like Asheville have to offer. That is another story however.

As previously stated, I offer this freely. Just as Bele Chere is the Southeast's largest outdoor free festival, why should the main stage performance not be the same. The bands who play the other stages deserve the pay they get. The exposure of the main stage alone would be well worth the effort. A performance consisting of the regions known and unknowns, all working together to display a community collaborative performance art masterpiece, for free- and with a concept which will create its own revenue, for the sake of the city we live in, the country we live in, to make that statement- FREE- well, that is what I believe Asheville is- Everything American.

I can have ready all the necessary information just in time for your retreat if you so desired to look it over. It is all much more simple than you may think. A brief summary is also on myspace.com/theeighthoctave

Thank you for your time, John

From: Lynne Lear [mailto:lynnelear@yahoo.com]

Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 10:55 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Belle Chere is one of my two sacrosanct weekends of the year - however I personally think that the festival has grown exponentially to the point that the stages need way more room - this past year it was impossible to get close enough to actually hear a single band. We went home pretty much having had a good time seeing friends, but without any music having been heard.

From: Lisa S [mailto:alwaysagoodstory@hotmail.com]

Sent: Friday, January 26, 2007 6:01 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Last year it rained and we were told we could not take in any umbrellas. Our understanding was this festival would be held regardless of rain and tickets were nonrefundable. If it's raining, who wants to stand in the rain with no umbrella. Also, no backpacks were allowed. I personally do not like to carry a purse. We had umbrellas - which we couldn't use in the concert venue, light jackets, among items that we purchased from vendors that we carried in our pack for the day. We took the chance to "hide" our very expensive pack in the bushes 5 blocks away from the venue and prayed it would be there when the concert was over late in the night rather than having to get a taxi back into town to return it to our hotel room.

Is it possible to move the "family activities" to a different area? It was right in front of the area where the large stage was. I would think it would serve both venues better and have less congestion if moved away from the area you walk into first. You saw many people sitting on curbs, standing, "waiting" to enter/exit, as if it were the "meeting" place. Difficult to walk around that area.

Not many outside cafe/restaurant seating. Would have been nice to see an outside venue where you can purchase from various restaurants (snacks and the like) and sit in an open 'picnic' area.

From: Lee Chesson [mailto:lchesson@alltel.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 7:13 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Melissa,

Although I am not an Asheville Citizen, I wanted to share my 2 cents about Bele Chere.

I have been a participating Artist for a couple of years, so I can offer a different perspective,

Currently, I would NEVER, EVER attend Bele Chere again. And I would warn any potential exhibitor accordingly - Saturday night of the 2006 Festival, someone broke into my booth and urinated all over my work. And for the looks of the disorderly and drunken crowd, I probably shouldn't be surprised.

After experiencing the rudeness and apathy of a couple of Police Officers when simply asked about parking, I probably shouldn't be surprised.

I am surprised, however, that the City of Asheville and Festival organizers apparently condone such debauchery by not taking the appropriate steps to ensure the protection and safety of participants and attendees, and creating a more ethical, family-oriented show experience.

I hope that future years will bring about positive changes for Bele Chere.

Regards and Best Wishes,

Lee
Beautiful Wooden Accessories for the Home
www.LeeChesson.com

From: Laura Norris [mailto:lauramnorris@charter.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 4:33 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Bele Chere is a family tradition for our family... my husband and I have enjoyed going to it each year and welcoming our friends from Boone, NC down to spend the weekend with us every last weekend of July. Now that we have kids we have enjoyed sharing the fun with them and getting them excited about the "big festival"!

Our favorite stage is the one that highlights singer/songwriters- The Nudes, Christine Kane, and Billy Jonas have been some of our favorite acts. We also love to visit the vendor booths and try to find a piece of art to bring home.

We have bought things in the past that we love, but the last couple of years my husband and I have been disappointed in the quality of the art. Many of the artists are selling work that does not appeal to our taste. Maybe it is trying to appeal to folks visiting from elsewhere, but it seems inappropriate for our Asheville festival. For example- there were paintings of palm trees and neon lights last year. I was even embarrassed for Asheville and our artists- hoping that the tourists realized that this is not what the artists in Asheville create.

We would love to see only local art sold at Bele Chere- or at least regional art with a jury process that only includes Asheville artists as the jurors. The "special" Art Park doesn't seem to have extraordinary art. Could that section be changed to be the Asheville Area Art Park? I think our residents would have more of a respect for the festival and that the festival goers would be awed.

Bele Chere is a wonderful way to showcase our city and create profit. We need to lure the tourists with enough variety, but we also need to attract our own residents to build revenue and respect for it.

Thank you!

Laura Norris

From: LaQuana Edwards [mailto:LaQuana.Edwards@buncombecounty.org]

Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 9:47 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I read suggestions for changing Bele Chere in the Citizens-Times. I agree that an "over haul" is needed. When considering making changes please keep in mind that many local families no longer attend the festival because it is not family oriented. Allowing alcohol sales on Sunday will further discourage local families from attending.

La Quana Edwards

From: I brown [mailto:adversion_420@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2007 10:58 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Please do not in anyway change Bele Chere. If you do I think it would be a horrible mistake and would show that you are out of touch with most locals.

Asheville is such a special place and this is a great event. I cant beleive you would even bring it up for question.

Laura Brown

The Artists' Basement

From: Kendell Youngs [mailto:kendell@airation.com]

Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 9:40 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: belle chere comments

1. i like the idea of making belle chere more 'local'!

2. i would like to see a date change to when it is not as hot outside.

3. and **MOST** importantly, the city needs to be **MAKING MONEY** on this event!!! there is no sense in taxpayers supporting this. with the volume of people that come for this event, there should be some way of profiting from it. if there isn't, we definitely should cancel the event.

kendell youngs
65 forest road
828-274-1032

From: katjohnson@charter.net [mailto:katjohnson@charter.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 10:35 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I am not able to attend the forum, but I wish to add my input. I think Bele Chere should be drastically reduced in size or stopped all together.

As a long time resident of Asheville, I do not attend. It has become a giant Flea Market with a priority on beer sales. Hence the name it has been given "Beer Chere" for a city sponsored drunk fest..

Local residents quality of life is disrupted by numerous intoxicated people who leave "Bele Chere" and then we get to enjoy them in the rest of our town.

As a small business owner, when a product or an item cost my company more money than the profits I make I no longer continue the product. Why do we continue Bele Chere? It is a waste of Cash, and Manpower.

From: kathy linville [mailto:klin321@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2007 3:00 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

I am a downtown resident (32 Broadway) and would just like to make a comment regarding Bele Chere. First, I think it is a wonderful festival for a city the size of Asheville. My comment is on trash disposal during the festival. Last year there were a few yellow trash cans around Pack Square for the purpose of recycling. I only knew that was the purpose of these cans because I read it in AC-T. As a visitor, I would not have known. This was a commendable beginning, but as a city that prides itself on being green, we should do much better. The main recyclables seem to be plastic water bottles and aluminum cans. I would like to see recycling cans all around the festival area, not just around Pack Square. Trash cans around the stage areas were literally overflowing with these recyclables. They also need to be clearly marked as to what recyclables can be placed in them. In other words, we need to make it easier and clearer for folks to recycle. Thanks

From: kathryn [mailto:prankmonky@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 8:36 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Hi Melissa,

Just read Robin's newsletter and wanted to put my two cents in re Bele Chere.

1. I would like to see a larger dance floor that is level.
 - a. Because there are so many dancers that they never fit on one stage and it becomes unsafe when you are dancing and you hit the edge.
 2. Asheville is known for its large dance community, many people (including me) actually moved here for the dancing.
 3. So that more people can enjoy the fun!
2. I would like to see more local artisans vendors rather than city merchants selling their commercial products.

Thanks for hearing my input,

Kathryn Gunn
164 School Rd

Asheville NC 28806

From: Judy Swan [mailto:jswanway@charter.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 2:03 PM

To: LBradley@ashevillenc.gov; mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Cc: mailto:mayorbellamy@ashevillenc.gov; hollyj@buncombe.main.nc.us; rcape@charter.net; jandavis@main.nc.us; freeborn@freebornasheville.com; drmumpower@aol.com; newmanasheville@aol.com

To all:

When I read the fact sheet you handed out Tuesday evening I realized adhering to the mission statement could have avoided many of the problems pointed out that evening.

Mission statement "... benefiting the local economy while celebrating the unique culture and diversity of Asheville."

1. most merchants in downtown would benefit more if BeleChere was not during their busiest time.
2. some merchants in downtown do not benefit at all from BeleChere, in fact they close that weekend.
3. merchants and businesses and residences on the fringe of the festival area get only trash and folks looking for a port a potty.
4. of the 159 crafters only 25 are local. BeleChere is hardly unique to Asheville when most vendors travel the festival circuit all over the southeast.
5. of the 51 regional acts only 24 are local musicians
6. Taste of Asheville was deemed one of the favorite parts of BC but only 19 local restaurants had booths; the bulk of the food vendors were itinerate.

Years ago a residential hotel in Evanston, IL had a sign "transients welcome" Perhaps Asheville should take down its 'sign'.

Thanks for a well organized discussion.

Judy Swan

From: Judith Zander [mailto:judithzander@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 10:13 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: Opinion on Bele Cher 2007, from just N. of Weaverville, in Madison Co.

"Opinion on Bele Cher 2007, from just N. of Weaverville, in Madison Co."

_ A booking preference for local area bands, is a terrific idea. _ Splitting the event into two (not four) events (that do not conflict with the timing of the Lake Eden Arts Festival in Black

Mountain or Swannanoa Gathering, etc.), would be optimum.

_ Using Hotel Tax to help with Bele Cher, is smart; getting sponsors additionally, would help. This event is good for the

town.

_ More Beer is Never a Good Idea

_ Western North Carolina Crafts tables would be a boon for local artisans and be an additional big pull for visitors to the

area.

_ The 1/31/07 Citizen Times article mentioned the suggestion of an additional couples dance floor: the more dance stages,

the merrier!

_ In deliberations, please keep Madison County's artists and craftspeople and musicians in the mix.

Best,

J.E. Zander
Marshall
658 0478

From: Jon Eggena [mailto:mtnhomeproperties@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 4:38 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere input...

Hey Melissa -

Just a quick minute to give you some thoughts re: Bele Chere.

First off...last year's Bele Chere was absolutely wonderful and enjoyed all the amazing bands (it seems this may have been one of the best for quality of music).

My dream was that-in usually all situations-the best parties are the ones that involve the most people. When people feel 'part' of something...or that they are contributing, it takes the party to a higher level.

With that, I was thinking how neat it would be to have a parade to either kick off Bele Chere or to end it or something to that effect. Various neighborhoods (e.g. - Montford, Kenilworth, Norwood Park, Grove Park, etc, etc) and organizations (Asheville affiliates or the Harley Davidson club of WNC or whatever) could participate in the parade and it would be something that brought all the residents of AVL together to celebrate our very own special town. This would force various organizations to work together and plan for the parade (whether it be a float or just costumes or whatever) and I believe would end up being something everyone really found fun & fascinating. The idea is that people are coming from all over to see Asheville, the culture, the music, etc. Why not show them our community in the form of a grand parade and make it something that showed off our people, residents, and way of life.

Currently, it seems that Bele Chere is a big party designed to lure in the outsiders, tourists, and anyone & everyone. Let's keep that coming...but now let's bring in a new dimension of getting more of the residents, organizations, and neighborhood communities to get involved and show off our awesome people!

Thoughts.

Jon Eggena
Mountain Home Properties
<http://www.mountaindream.com/>

From: John Russell [mailto:john.russell@montfordparkplayers.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 3:29 PM
To: Melissa Porter
Subject: Bele Chere Feedback

Melissa,

Although I was unable to attend the Forum due to a prior meeting commitment, I would suggest increasing the price of the alcohol wristbands.

Those who choose to drink will pay any reasonable price, and those who don't won't have to purchase one.

Regards,

John Russell
Managing Director, The Montford Park Players

From: John F OR ELIZABETH Mojjis [mailto:mojjisj@msn.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 1:06 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere comments

To Bele Chere Staff:

Comments:

Last year I participated in the ART In The Park area of Bele Chere. I came up from South Florida, and was warned by many other artist that in the past that participated in your event, not to do it. Why, I asked, and was told that it is mainly a "Drink Fest", with many young people just rousing the streets out right drunk. They were right, and for one I will not return.

As past owner of the Lake Lure Inn, and the primary individual that brought the movie Dirty Dancing to your area which was filmed on my property, and that put on many festivals in Lake Lure, from Jazz, Beach Music to Big Band festival, and heard so much about Bele Chere that I just had to try it with my art. What a disappointment. I have done over 100 art shows all over the south in the past two years, and as soon as I mention "Bele Chere" to other artist, they have the same or worst comments.

If you expect to attract artist, in the future you will have to have another event with a different name. The Drink Fest associated with Bele Chere is to wide spread in my opinion to correct. No artist is going to put up with no security, after being told there would be, and after hours finding that they(young people) invaded many tents using them as bathrooms, and in some cases urinating on art work.

There isn't anything wrong with young people's music, but it does not attract those who have more dollars to spend on art.

I spoke to many local folks too, and their feelings are the same. They just do not want to go anymore.

Good luck, John Mojjis

From: John Ellis [mailto:jellis@dwtheatre.com]
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 9:30 AM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: Melissa Porter

Lauren and Melissa,

I did not attend the open forum at the Civic Center earlier this week, and to be honest I was surprised that only 75 people were there. I felt I didn't have anything to offer as I represent a downtown business that simply closes and locks its doors at 5pm on Friday and then avoids downtown for the entire weekend. We are not able to present anything in the Diana Wortham Theatre that weekend (although some have inquired, not knowing it was Bele Chere weekend). It just wouldn't make sense to compete with the music on the street, and folks couldn't get to the theatre anyway.

About 2-3 years ago we began closing Pack Place for the Festival as we were nothing but a public toilet - we saw no increase in business and it was a nuisance to be open.

So I'm one of those folks who is dealing from impressions of the festival, with the most negative impression being that Saturday night is not a time I would want to bring my family downtown.

You do a tremendous job setting up the festival in a very short period of time, and when I do come back downtown on Monday the area is very clean - thank you!

So I guess I'd have to say - thanks for the weekend off - and thanks for Friday afternoon, the only time I do walk through the festival and eat food from local restaurants.

John Ellis
Managing Director
Diana Wortham Theatre at Pack Place
2 South Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801
828-257-4512 voice
828-251-5652 fax
www.dwttheatre.com

From: John Dieringer [mailto:jjdier@charter.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 8:18 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Congratulations to the city for looking to improve Bele Chere. I have a couple of suggestions .

1. The City should stop losing money on this fair - in fact most fairs actually make money. There is something wrong when we homeowners constantly have to subsidize the Civic Ctr.entertainment, the Bele Chere, and many other ways the city mishandles our money which is meant for services. Look at the budget and see where the large costs are and what can be done about it.

2. Possibly move Bele Chere to the Agricultural Ctr., or to Biltmore sq. mall parking lot. Both places have lots of parking, the mall has a lot of open outside area for booths and entertainment, needs the extra customers to come inside, and already has sanitary facilities. Some of the out of towners would come into the city also so our restaurants and motels would get some extra business anyway. Our motel tax should be raised and should help fund these city activities and the new civic ctr also. They are the ones who benefit from these concerts, not the homeowners.

Thanks for listening and I hope you can find a way to improve this situation.

Sincerely,
John Dieringer
jjdier@charter.net

From: Jim Samsel [mailto:jim@samselarchitects.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 9:29 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: Jennifer Taylor

I think the festival should be smaller and moved to September or kept as is and moved to the Riverfront.

thx

Jim Samsel, AIA

LEED Accredited Professional

From: Jessica Jennings [mailto:jessica.jennings@bcsemail.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 4:20 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

It was nice to see an article about revamping Bele Chere. I attended Bele Chere 10 years ago and loved the music, crafts, and atmosphere. This year I avoided Bele Chere. When I attended Bele Chere in 2005, I was amazed at the number of chintzy booths, selling things akin to what you find at the state fair. We have so many amazing artists and craftsmen in and around Asheville, but they were not there. I would like to see BC return to supporting regional musicians, businesses and artists. The ticketed big name shows should be done away with. While they may draw more people and bring in more money, they do not support the spirit of the festival.

While not directly related to BC, I have also often thought that Asheville is lacking in a regular craft/arts/food market. I have lived in many cities that have a weekly or monthly market set up in the summer time. Asheville has a few small Sat. markets, but I believe there is the population and resources to create a more robust type of market in the downtown area. This would be a wonderful tradition to create in the new downtown/city hall park.

Lastly, I would just like to say that you should focus on creating events that not only draw tourists, but are also geared towards locals and community building.

Thank you for your time and effort. I hope these suggestions are helpful.

Sincerely,

Jessica Jennings

From: Jerry Conner [mailto:jerryc@goburco.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2007 5:03 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Alternative site for Bele Chere

I think that as a businessman and someone who enjoys the benefits of Bele Chere, that there is an alternative site rather than just eliminate it. Move the Festival base:

New Orleans has a Jazz Festival every year, but it is not downtown in the quarter like Mardi Gras it is outside the main part of the city.

Bele Chere can do the same change the core of the festival.

Utilize Martin Luther King Park and spread the festival out from there upwards to the Courthouse to Pack Square.

a) this opens up downtown to regular visitors and shoppers who can take advantage of both the festival and what Asheville

has to offer

b) Many businesses that close for the weekend now can remain open with real shoppers.

c) Entertainment is kept in areas that can be policed and kept under control.

d) Parking can then be set up up and down Charlotte street to include the Baseball field and other areas.

From: Jabfes@aol.com [mailto:Jabfes@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 8:29 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere

Hi,

As part time downtown residents, we want to state clearly that we LOVE BELLE CHERE.

Please do not eliminate this uniquely Ashevillean event.

Frank Sagendorph and Jude Berger

From: J. Segell [mailto:j_segell@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 12:32 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere 2005

I was afraid to come back to Bele Chere 2006. We were nearly crushed Saturday night 2005 in the crowd around Sam Bush on the Biltmore stage Sat. nite. I wish I didn't have to send such a negative vibe, but it was dangerous and scary. If you are not addressing the issue of crowd control, I think something bad could definitely happen.

From: J J Hcutt [mailto:jahjwh@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 7:50 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: opinion on Bele Chere

My first thought I cannot believe you want to mess with success. Bele Chere is great just the way it is. The crowds are manageable. The music is great. The variety of foods and items for sale is good. I think there should be local participation, music, food and merchants; however, it should not be only local. I fear the festival would suffer if limited too much to only local participation.

I do not believe it is too big. It should not be broken up into multiple festivals or shrunk in size. If the local merchants are upset about the time of year, I don't think moving it would impact it greatly. However if it is during school, Friday afternoon would be dead as far as children.

I think downtown is the perfect location for the festival. I know it impacts the downtown merchants and can affect sales for those days. But it calls attention to what is downtown. Even if you don't patronize the businesses during the festival, you will later because you know what is downtown. The festival does not completely eliminate business. Last year I noticed lines out the door at two downtown restaurants.

Last the idea that it has outlasted it's usefulness.

New businesses are opening all the time. The festival gets you all over downtown where you can be introduced to the new businesses. This is just as important now as it was when Bele Chere started.

Jane

From: isabel w taylor [mailto:bellsteve44@msn.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 2:56 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Cher

The first Bele Cher was loads of fun! Local music (not the imported wanna-be California-type back-to-the-country, make fun of the Hillbillies or Hollywood-it-up tourist music that we see at the Shin Dig and the Mountain Folk Fest) local folks, blocked off streets and a safe and peaceful crowd.

The second year it was a little bigger but still mostly WNC foks and bands and folk singers. There were even a few local rock and roll bands and some classical too. Still safe and fun and not too crowded.

The third year was a little scary. Rough and rowdy at night and it didn't feel safe anymore. We stopped going at night.

About the eighth year (I think) I was asked to manage one of the stages, which I did, gladly, with no pay, just a free T-shirt. That year there was really serious trouble at night.

The years following were so expensive and so dreadfully crowded that we just avoided it like the plague. Friends from out of town were advised to visit on any other weekend. It's a BIG SWEATY DRUNKEN, EXPENSIVE, VIOLENT, HORROR now. I'd love to see it change back but as the businesses say...it's good for them ...they make money! I guess money is what Asheville has become all about now...what a shame. We have lost our identity and we are losing our local culture. Weaverville, Waynesville, Barnardsville, and Hendersonville and others have preserved it...why can't Asheville?

From: impurdy2@bellsouth.net [mailto:impurdy2@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 07, 2007 11:13 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Dance tent at Bel Chere

I have been a dancer in Asheville for 11 years. I have attended City Stages and think that Asheville could and should provide such a venue as this. This is a dance capita. Asheville is host to such a variety of dance forms and they should be showcased during Bele Chere. Thanks for considering to have a dance tent with a level dance floor. Marti Terry-Purdy

From: hugslong@aol.com [mailto:hugslong@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 11:53 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I am not able to attend the forum this evening due to another commitment. I would like to say something.

No matter how people feel about Bele Chere it is a definite fact a great deal of money is brought into the city. Why would anyone want to stop this? It is not all about the downtown shops.

A private company would not work nearly as well.

We DO NOT NEED two fee concerts. One very popular and then our own talented bands, etc in Western North Carolina.

Think well on this and do not forget Bele Chere really put Asheville on the map.

Peggy S. Long

From: Holly Bullman [mailto:holly@landofsky.org]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 4:59 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: Wendy Simmons
Subject: Bele Chere Input

Hi Melissa,

I heard you're in charge of the public input for Bele Chere, so I thought I would share my two cents.

Being the recycling enthusiast that I am (both personally and professionally), I was curious if ya'll might be able to do one thing for this year's recycling efforts at Bele Chere: publicize the total amount of recyclable materials recovered during the last Bele Chere (or even in the City of Asheville for last year). This is a great marketing strategy to show to the public that 1) the material really is recycled and 2) recycling makes a difference. My suggestion is to publicize this information either on the recycling bins as a print-out (just something cheap and simple) and/or in the ads ya'll typically run in the Mountain Express advertising recycling at the festival.

If you and the committee like this idea, I can help draft something for review. To go a step further, we could even take that number (# pounds of recycled stuff) and equate it to other environmental factors such as greenhouse gases prevented, air/water pollution prevented, etc on the print-out. This is a proven strategy for marketing recycling - showing what recycling really means. I will be happy to help with this calculation if an amount of recycling from last year is available. (Wendy, don't know if you have that, but you'd be the one I would ask if so).

By promoting the recycling services at the festival, not only are we helping to divert material, but we're also helping the City save money from the waste tipped at the landfill.

Thank you for the consideration,

Holly

From: Heather Rayburn [mailto:hrayburn@charter.net]
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2007 1:41 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Input on Bele Chere

Hello,

I got Kendra's email about the forum and won't be able to attend so am emailing my comments. I'd like to see the city discontinue Bele Chere. I'd rather see them put the money into promoting local businesses and the greening of the downtown.

Thanks,
Heather Rayburn
Five Points, 28801

From: guy morganstein [mailto:guyam@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2007 11:06 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject:

As Asheville is a center of dance in the south, this is a request for having a real dance stage at Bele Chere, having Zydeco, Cajun, swing, salsa, etc. for people to dance to. This has been lacking in the past few years, it would be great if they had a real wooden floor rather than people having to dance on the concrete, please pick a flat area as well, rather than on a hill, this will make the Bele Chere experience much more pleasant. Guy Morganstein

From: George [mailto:lazygk@charter.net]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 7:37 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject:

Get rid of it. It's a joke.

From: gdastoli@charter.net [mailto:gdastoli@charter.net]
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2007 1:59 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere

Dear Ms. Porter:

My husband and I moved to Asheville almost 15 years ago and we plan our vacations/trips to be sure we are here for Belle Chere.

Belle Chere has changed over the years - not as great as it was earlier with more musicians, etc. on the street, but still super. To even think about not continuing this fantastic weekend is unthinkable! If some of the taxes we pay are used to supplement this community celebration, great!!!

I know there are some that do not like the festival and do not attend, but 300,000 people cannot be wrong. We have volunteered at this celebration and if our health permits, we will again assist in this wonderful weekend. We need to keep traditions - not destroy them. Please vote to continue this event. Thank you, Gloria and Frank Dastoli 31

Innsbrook Road
Asheville, NC 28804

PS: One of the vendors behind a booth was different this past year - when I asked where the older gentleman was, the young girl thanked me for asking, her father passed away several months prior. She was very appreciative for the kindness of remembering her dad - and we encouraged her to keep coming back to Asheville, she said she would because of the people.

From: Fred Guggenheim [mailto:katogugg@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2007 1:04 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Cher

I am pleased that in your email you state, "We want to make sure Bele Chere continues to reflect what citizens want in a community celebration, ..."

My wife and I live in an apartment in downtown Asheville. We have many friends and neighbors who also live downtown. I don't know any of them who like Bele Cher. In fact most of our downtown friends make sure they are out of town the days of Bele Cher.

We live on Commerce Street, diagonally across from the post office. Bele Cher has a stage on Coxe Ave with loudspeakers that blast directly at our windows.

Most of the small business owners downtown that we know also dislike Bele Cher. It interrupts their business and in fact many of them close during this "festival". Each day of Bele Cher leaves the streets downtown dirty and littered. It seems to me that Bele Cher is a festival that is celebrated by out of town visitors and merchants.

If the city wishes to continue this event it should be held out of town away from the residents and local businesses who pay city taxes but gain no benefits from the event.

Fred Guggenheim

From: fdastoli6197@charter.net [mailto:fdastoli6197@charter.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 9:52 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

In answer to the question "Has Bele Chere run its course" says Mayor Bellamy.

Perhaps there is an underlying agenda here by some to provoke the demise of the festival.

We, my wife and I, came here 16 years ago. We have lived in 6 states and 10 homes. We were completely amazed to see Asheville have a Bele Chere. We have attended 2 days of the festival each of those years. We wouldn't miss it for the world. We attended such festivals in such cities as Boston, NY, Chicago and Texas. The residents of these cities loved and supported these events. After seeing over 300,000 people attending Bele Chere each year, there is no question that they, and I say "Bele Chere is important to the community" The question is not to stop Bele Chere but how to improve it. Costs for city personnel are there whether we have Bele Cher or not.

Some thoughts:

Raise vendor charges for food/drink 5-10 cents to be returned to the city. Raise hotel room rates \$1, at this time only, return to city. Charge more for the gated events. Just look at what it costs for people to get into all the musical events that occur almost every night in Asheville. It's not \$15. Charge \$1 to get in at the gate, \$.75 before event. With 300,000 they should be more than enough to result in a surplus to be carried over to the next year.

Above all do not let Bele Chere leave Asheville.

Frank Dastoli
252-6197

From: Emily Bidwell [mailto:emily@emilybidwell.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2007 11:09 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov; Lauren Bradley
Subject: Bele Chere

Thank you for taking the time to listen about Bele Chere.

A couple of key things to think about. I have years of marketing and festival organizing and believe there are some valid points - but I am seeing HUGE problems in the suggestions of the public. I'm just being brief, and to the point..

1) Do not dilute the festival into four parts. Quadruple the set up and break down, quadruple the volunteer needs, quadruple the clean up. You'll lose volunteer power. Smaller festivals are rampant in Asheville, we do not need another LEAF or Smilefest.

2) Do not refocus on local talent only. Why would locals want to go see someone they can see at the Westville Pub anytime? I know my friends from out of town won't come if larger acts are not featured. Although it's a feel good thing for Asheville, it would be a death for the festival. Locals have plenty of opportunity to take part in this festival, they just haven't taken advantage of it. It's hip to hate Bele Chere..haven't you heard?

3) **Look at Jazzfest as a model.** Paying for a weekend bracelet isn't out of the question - just bring in the national acts with some quality. Why not involve the local venues such as The Orange Peel and Stella Blue?

4) The national acts cannot be the likes of Train. Gearing to the younger, non-paying crowds is a no-win situation. This needs to be refocused on acts that have larger roots in the music industry such as Doc Watson, Neville Brothers and the like. Trying to appease the younger crowd never works. Get your talent more inline with those who have money.

5) Moving the date is a FANTASTIC idea.

6) Corporate sponsorship is a FANTASTIC idea..

Thanks for your time, I hope this give a little light on things.
Good luck! It's a great festival -

Emily Bidwell

From: eivey@mindspring.com [mailto:eivey@mindspring.com]
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2007 9:00 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere Input

I can't make the session Tuesday, but I wanted to pass along that I would love to see Bele Chere evolve into a regional heritage celebration, with the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, Craft Guild, and other scattered "mountain history" events becoming a part, maybe even the holiday parade. Wouldn't it be fun to have a chance to show off the latest in WNC food, music and crafts, all in the same place at the same time? I would think the combined volunteer support, together with the cost-savings of shared administrative expenses, generated by getting all these organizations to work together would sustain Bele Chere for some time, not to mention getting corporate and grant support for a heritage event, as opposed to raising money for a "beer bash" as one detractor called it.

Of course, I will always go even if it stays the way it is. I have been attending faithfully since the '80s, and I have a group of diverse friends that return to Asheville each year just for this event. When I was younger I just liked to party and see bands and artists from outside the area. But now that there are so many local festivals bringing outside music in (i.e., LEAF), I long for something that preserves our own unique brand of culture.

I'm a former Parks and Rec Board member, Christmas Parade committee member, native Ashevillean, and Bele Chere volunteer, and would be glad to help in any way I can!

Eleanor Ivey Campbell

From: Douglas Ewen [mailto:dpewen@bellsouth.net]

Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 12:05 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: Bele Chere

Hello,

I was unable to attend the Bele Chere forum but wanted to pass on my comments.

I love Bele Chere in the current format. I think there is a good mix of national and local talent. I do not have a problem with the pay shows.

The festival is awesome, the music is outstanding, and the arts and crafts wonderful ... please keep up the good work!

I live in downtown Asheville and am retired at 55 .. but my real age is 24.

Peace,

Douglas Ewen

828.271.6699

From: doug_methvin@rotec-sleeves.com [mailto:doug_methvin@rotec-sleeves.com]

Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 4:46 PM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Subject: KEEP BELE CHERE!!!!

It's a tradition, sure we don't need it to revitalize downtown anymore, but everyone has a good time. It's a unique event.

From: Donna Wright [mailto:jazzygiraffe1@bellsouth.net]

Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 10:52 AM

To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Good Morning. I am a business owner as well as a down town resident. I have only been in town for one Bele Chere, but was able to quickly assess the event from my perspective.

Following are my thoughts:

*I feel the the city of Asheville is on an amazing "upswing". As high end shops, restaurants and residents continue to turn their attention to this town, the town needs to turn its attention to drawing more high end visitors. In that vein, I believe continuing to hold festivals which revolve around beer in the streets and rock-and-roll bands simply work against that goal.

If we are to have festivals, let's look towards those that resonate with the spirit of this city -- those which revolve around the arts and crafts scene, the fine food scene, heritage and ethnic scenes, and musical scenes which include jazz and classical. Someone compared Bele Chere to Spoleto in Charleston. Only one who has never attended Spoleto would dream of making that comparison.

Spoleto is about live performances, art shows, gallery walks, chamber music events, jazz events, world renown dance troupes performing, etc. It draws huge crowds, and the types that benefit the city to host -- those who support the arts of Charleston. I think it would be a

wonderful model for Asheville to consider to replace Bele Chere. Our city is beyond the type of event Bele Chere represents. We should be working towards a more dignified event to reflect what we have and are continuing to become -- a place of culture and heritage with much to offer its business people, residents and visitors.

Thank you for considering these comments. Like other shopkeepers I have spoken to, I would probably plan to close during the festival this year based on the experiences I had last year.

Best of luck. I think that allowing this type of input and forum is another sign that this city is moving in forward directions. I appreciate your willingness to listen, as I'm sure both sides of this issue feel very strongly regarding Bele Chere.

Donna Wright

From: diana cerce [mailto:florabella@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 6:17 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: bele chere

yes, i would like to share my opinion of city taxpayers paying for bele chere:

I AM AN ASHEVILLE TAX PAYING RESIDENT AND DO NOT WANT TO FUND BELE CHERE!!!!..

i no longer attend bele chere because drinking alcohol seems to be the main attraction...

diane cerce
w. asheville

From: Dee Sharp [mailto:dee@deejewelry.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 11:56 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: input about Belle Chere

Thank you for providing a means to provide input about Bele Chere for those of us who could not attend the meeting.

My comment has to do with the selection process for the arts crafts exhibitor.

It has not made sense to me that as a local craftsperson I am not given any "priority" over out of area applicants (or at least out of state). In that we should be supporting LOCAL businesses, locally grown produce, and locally made crafts/art... this makes no sense. As a professional craftsperson of more than 20 years, having exhibited and displayed my work at hundreds of professionally juried shows, I was turned down for Bele Chere. For my hometown show, this was crazy. We should be showcasing locally made work to the thousands of visitors that come to Bele Chere. It is hard enough to make a living here, support us please.

Sincerely,
Dee Sharp
www.deejewelry.com

From: Debra Sluder [mailto:debra@mountaincity.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 5:50 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

Hi.. I have been involved with a non-profit booth at Bele Chere for twenty years or so. I've seen a lot of changes. I personally think it has gone downhill and become too much of a "carny" atmosphere that has nothing to do with downtown Asheville. I remember when the Taste of Asheville around Pack Square lived up to its name. I'd like to see it go back to the days when non-profits ran "Beer Gardens" and drunks were not roaming the sidewalk with a beer in hand. I feel like it has become something of a redneck or drunks convention and it is just not as pleasant as it used to be. I'd like to see more of a variety of music, such as classical and beach or R&B, male opera, something other than hard rock. I guess some of the younger generation like a lot of the recent music, but I have hated it. We never go unless we have to do volunteer work. I liked the tickets better than cash and I just think it is out-of-control and somehow it needs to be toned down and made classier again. I think the drinking, even if not part of Sunday, is still too blatant and obvious. Sitting down for a beer somewhere is a far cry from roaming the streets with a beer sloshing in hand. I am not a teetotaler or anti-drinking, I just think the festival is headed down to the gutter and is tasteless. Asheville is such an artistic, beautiful city with incredible restaurants and Bele Chere does not show that off.

Thanks for taking public input. I appreciate the chance to get on the soap box! Good luck!

Debra Furr Sluder

From: Daniel Rich [mailto:danjjl@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 6:41 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: dance stage

Ms Porter

I write in support of the concept of an improved dance stage. I don't live in town anymore, but I came to Bele Chere last year just to dance Zydeco at Wild Wing. I hope a dance stage seems like a workable idea

Dan Rich
Seneca, SC From: Daniel Hunnicutt [mailto:coolhipname@hotmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2007 11:00 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: bele cher

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am an Asheville native currently going to law school in Columbia, SC, but I still come up every year for bele cher. It is one of my favorite events and I usually bring many friends from this area with me. Please do not make any major changes to Bele Cher or its format. It is perfect just as it is

in my mind. How could it possibly be better? It displays both the culture of Asheville and the culture of the mountains in which it is situated. Please leave well enough alone.

Daniel Hunnicutt

From: Cliff Lawless [mailto:cbass75@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 11:44 AM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I don't like the idea of breaking up Bele Chere into a few mini festivals. We already have Downtown After 5. There is no need for another. If you were going to do this, you might as well just increase the Downtown After 5 budget to make it more of a festival. I do not work for either organization, but I know that the Downtown Committee has smart people that can handle a bigger budget.

Thanks for hearing me,
Cliff

From: Christine Smith [mailto:cijp1860@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 27, 2007 2:31 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

Hi -

My husband and I attended our first Bele Chere last year. We noticed two things. One, why was Budweiser the only beer sold when Asheville has micro-breweries? It would seem that Bele Chere would promote locally made products. The second is that there were a lot of booths selling low quality crafts or products. We're not saying that Bele Chere should be a juried crafts fair, but some of the items for sale were really marginal - actually, the same old stuff that's been in craft fairs for the past thirty or forty years. Asheville some unique things going for it, but the Bele Chere that we saw last year could have been held anywhere. Why not shift the balance of the types of items sold? Instead of the usual craft fair fare, focus less on that and more on what the Asheville area has that is different or native to the Blue Ridge? That's why people come here to visit or live after all.

Thanks -

Christine Smith

-----Original Message-----

From: JB [mailto:jb@greeninkpr.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 3:06 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: Jennifer Taylor
Subject: Bell Chere

Lauren,

I've lived in downtown Asheville for three years, and I think Bele Chere is great. It's one of the many reasons I decided to move to Asheville, and I look forward to it every year.

Many "locals" come down with what I call the "Bele Chere flu" during the week prior to the festival. It's as if it's "not cool" to dig Bele Chere, especially to pay the cover charge for the headliners. One of the most interesting comments I heard last year from a friend of mine was, "It's just too much of a production."

Having moved here from Charlotte and Charleston, I find it laughable that the "natives" can't tolerate the crowds and a little traffic to see some of the best bands around -- mostly of them for free! Anyone who thinks Bele Chere is too big should visit Charlotte during the Center City Fest or Charleston during Spoleta. Just don't let them attend Midtown Music Festival in Atlanta or they're likely to have a coronary.

As for the businesses that claim they are hurt by the festival, my feeling is, if your business is running on such a slim margin that you can't close for one weekend out of the entire year, there's obviously something much more significant hurting your business than Bele Chere. Also, I find it ironic that the businesses that pretend to be "too hip" to participate in Bele Chere are still profiting from it by having their "anti Bele Chere" events.

There's a simple solution to controlling the crowds and traffic -- if the festival is indeed getting too large for our sleepy little town, which I doubt, simply charge admission for the entire festival (like every other significant outdoor music festival in the country) and you'd quickly see that most of us would be more than happy to help support the bands.

Just my two cents,
Jonathan Scott
Sawyer Motor Building
(828) 337-9991

From: Byron Greiner [[<mailto:byron_greiner@yahoo.com>](mailto:byron_greiner@yahoo.com)]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 6:16 PM
To: 'Debi Smith'; 'Melissa Porter'

Revised after the January 30th Civic Center Bele Chere forum as to grammar and content. Please reread. Thank you, John Cram

January 31, 2007

Bele Chere was the perfect event for a dying downtown back in the late 1970's. People who would never come downtown came for Bele Chere. Our historical architecture charmed and inspired many future local entrepreneurs. They saw all the empty buildings and dreamed of a thriving downtown. Bele Chere served Asheville well for a number of years, always expanding and being bigger and better. Eventually many people have grown to feel Bele Chere is now too big and does not represent the spirit of the city of Asheville.

Today the rub for many merchants is that the downtown is now developed and full of life and Bele Chere, instead of complimenting, competes with one of our important summer weekends. Weekends are a vital component of many businesses, where usually the greatest amount of sales occurs.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day there are only 14 weekends. Now many entrepreneurs have to make a choice between "making their peace with B.C." or closing. The ones that stay open are forced into buying a different grade of merchandise (usually cheaper) to justify the cost of a booth space. They are obliged to rent space in order to preserve their visibility during the festival. The alternative, if they did not rent space, would be to have their store front blocked by who knows what. Some businesses, usually alcohol related do very well. Restaurants either redefine

menus or close. Higher scale restaurants often close. A recent addition, three years ago, of a new stage on Biltmore Avenue in front of the Blue Spiral 1 closed this business too. It had been difficult being open pre-stage, but now it's impossible. Festival sprawl.

The Fine Arts Theatre has 22 screenings on weekends- Friday to Sunday. When the theatre first opened they tried Bele Chering and had five patrons for the 22 shows over the three days of Bele Chere! We are open for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and New Years Day like all other theatres, but we have to close for Bele Chere!

What is the right size festival for Asheville today?

The festival now dominates all of downtown. It is like urban sprawl. **Bele Chere suffers from festival sprawl.**

Several years ago, all the previous directors emeritus of Bele Chere were removed from the advisory board. This had the effect of erasing the collective memory of the organization. This was not a good move. No one could speak to how it was once done and to suggest change from past experience. It may have helped the current directors make unchallenged decisions but in the long run they were less informed with the loss of these individuals' input.

When should Bele Chere take place?

Bele Chere started in the month of August and then moved to the event-crowded month of July. The Tourism and Development Board of the Chamber of Commerce once wrote a letter suggesting that a shoulder season time would make more sense than during the height of the tourist season. A shoulder season is defined as months or weeks before peak tourism. They urged, and it makes perfect sense, to develop non-peak periods to enhance the community's revenue and sales.

B.C. likes to claim a great economic impact. I challenge that factoid. The hotel and gross figures claimed by Bele Chere leaders are misleading. The question that needs to be asked, do they factor in what happens the weekends before and after Bele Chere? In short if Bele Chere did not exist what would that weekend mean to the town economically. How much does it really add to the local economy since we know businesses are forced to close that weekend?

Another economic impact that is not considered is the fact that vast majority of street vendors are from out of town. They take the profits with them. Local small businesses spend back 50% of what they earn in their community.

Shouldered season revisited.

Why not put Bele Chere into September? There are many festivals around the country that conduct their events during that month.

A previous mayor once told me that B.C. couldn't do that as the festival depends on free student labor. I pointed out that you identify their labor as community volunteerism: have an assembly to talk about community involvement, close the schools one day and then thank the student volunteers with a personal certificate from the mayor's office. In short turn their work into civics' lesson.

With Pack Square being redeveloped we have a chance of redefining Bele Chere.

A great deal of the festival will shift to Pack Square once completed. This would go a long way in relieving the sprawl of Bele Chere: allowing streets and merchants to reopen? Bele Chere is a monster of a festival. It has become out of control by lack proper planning and input. The committee in the past has ignored many community suggestions. I applaud Mayor Bellamy and city council in their effort to change Bele Chere into something that would involve a greater portion of the community and would be more reflective of our cultural strengths. Right now we open our doors and let our city be invaded by non-tax paying, non-local vendors and invite people to drink, often excessively, in the streets and call it a festival. Are we proud of this accomplishment?

Bele Chere needs to become "**bele SHARE**", a more community friendly festival that unites Asheville and respects local entrepreneurs. Or it needs to end.

At the very least can we have a real economic study that includes the impact of lost revenues on local businesses? Also we need to determine the "added" value of Bele Chere not just looking at the total economic factors of that weekend. (Study weekends before and after to get an honest handle on these murky statistics.)

Other issues not brought up here: Budweiser versus local breweries sponsorship.
Local booking of entertainment. We could talk about how the Thomas Wolfe house burned on the eve of Bele Chere and three nights later vandals entered the empty Grove Arcade and set off fire extinguishers: \$85,000 damage. Gun play. Knifings. Much of this goes unreported.

Sincerely,
John Cram
Downtown business owner: Blue Spiral 1, Fine Arts Theatre.

From: Bob Burns [mailto:landofskymanager@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, January 28, 2007 1:43 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

Hi,

I will be unable to attend the Forum on Bele Chere as it is on a rehearsal night for my organization, the Land of the Sky Barbershop Chorus, Asheville Chapter of The Barbershop Harmony Society, Inc.

I have a short observation about Bele Chere.

I moved here almost 5 years ago from the northeast. I have loved WNC, and specifically Bele Chere ever since coming here. Bele Chere is special and unique, however I think it is missing some important elements. Those elements have to do with attracting the older residents of region.

This part of the southeastern US generally, and WNC specifically, attracts and is home to a large number of retired people. I do not think that in its present form, Bele Chere is attractive to this demographic. I feel that people who could be easily drawn to Bele Chere are put off by: 1) the relative limited variety of entertainment (limited variety = geared mostly to the young); 2) no good respite from the heat and sun; and, 3) large crowds, with the ensuing commotion.

I recommend that Bele Chere include an/some indoor venues and entertainment for the older attendees. I bet that if this were done right, the Bele Chere attendance could increase by 20-30%.

Sincerely,
Robert W. Burns, Jr.
121 Dorchester Ave., Asheville, NC 28806
828-242-5495

Note: I am the former VP of Marketing and PR, and Chorus Manager for the Land of the Sky Chorus. We unsuccessfully applied to perform at Bele Chere 2006. For Bele Chere 2007, our Board has decided to not apply because they are anticipating a difficult venue (read that "hot") to perform in if accepted. We will, however, apply for a non-profit information booth. That worked out well for us last year in attracting new younger members, men who had not been exposed to barbershop harmony before.

From: Beverley Anderson [mailto:bevand@buncombe.main.nc.us]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 12:15 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov.

Dear Melissa,

Thank you for your willingness to give the Asheville dancers an opportunity to create better dance floors at Bele Chere.

I have been an Asheville citizen and dancer for nine years. Unfortunately I had to move from Asheville to Charlotte, July 2006. Living in Charlotte there are not many similar opportunities to listen to good music and to dance with the enthusiastic and skilled dance community. The dance and music options here, with a few exceptions are more like the corporate chain options for dining out. I dearly miss the opportunities for good music and dance that I had in Asheville. For dancers and future dancers, it is one of the things that stand out and make Asheville quality of life so much more than life here in Charlotte; it is one of the things that make a community a sharing community; that add a joy for living and sharing.

I know there are many festival attendees that enjoy watching the dancers even though they may not currently be dancers.

I remember an experience during Bele Chere at the dance floor in front of the Blue Spiral Fine Arts Gallery, perhaps five years back, when a couple in the crowd stopped me to tell me how much my dancing and obvious joy in dancing had added to their day and their enjoyment of the festival. The interaction added to my enjoyment of the festival. It was a sharing I had not expected.

I am writing to encourage Asheville to create better situations for dancers to enjoy and add to the excitement of Bele Chere. I understand that there is an opportunity for the dance floors to get better, for dance participation by the community to once again be considered an integral part of the Bele Chere experience. I certainly vote for that!

Beverley Anderson

From: Rudy Rodriguez [mailto:rudster@mindspring.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2006 11:57 PM
To: 'Bele Chere'

Sandra Travis,
Hey, it's Rudy. As we come close to ending the year I want to remind you of your interest in my idea for a Dance Stage at Bele Chere 2007. I hope we can begin to explore the idea very early in the new year as it will take some work to get it moving. Having chaired the Entertainment Committee in the past I know we were looking at bands as early as Dec and Jan before the festival. Please keep me posted when you are ready to explore the idea.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Rudy Rodriguez
rudster@mindspring.com
828-301-1904

Dear Bele Chere Board
I know this is a busy time for you but I wanted to drop a suggestion for next year. I would like to promote the idea of a Bele Chere dance stage. I have served on the Bele Chere Board and served both as a member and Chairperson of the Entertainment Committee several years ago thus have some understanding of the process. Asheville has a very large and diverse dance community but over the years the so-called dance stage conditions has have suffered. Great things are possible for a first class dance stage. I'm aware that some of you visited the Birmingham City Stages festival recently and I hope you had occasion to see both the popularity and awesome set up for the dance stage. This stage is managed by a friend of mine. He helps to book and has a crew of dance volunteers who manage the stage. Sponsorship is shared but the music and the conditions are first class. This is what I see as possible for a Bele Chere Dance Stage.

There are several minor and more involved changes that could occur to enhance both the quality and "safety" of this Biltmore stage. I'd be happy to meet with a Bele Chere Board or Entertainment representative at this year's Biltmore stage to share some thoughts on quality and safety.

p.s. I'll help develop \$\$ sponsorship and leadership for a quality dance stage.

I'd love to help create this as a reality for Bele Chere 2007 and hope to hear from you.

Thank you very much,
Rudy Rodriguez
rudster@mindspring.com

rudster@mindspring.com

From: Elzy Lindsey [mailto:mrlindsey2003@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 12:38 PM
To: belechere@ashevillenc.gov

Last year was my first Bele Chere, having moved here from New Orleans after Katrina. Bele Chere miraculously falls on my birthday weekend and truly is a phenomenal event. I am a schoolteacher in the city schools and as such, will likely never be able to attend the New Orleans Jazz Fest again (due to EOG tests being offered at the same time) so Bele Chere is it for me...

I do offer a few comments in the hope that they will be used to make what is a stellar event even better.

- 1) I'd like to see bands that hail from Carolina (or nearby) and have made some dent in the charts... Noticeably absent from the bill are (in no particular order) the Connells, Dillon Fence, Patty Hurst Shifter, Superdrag, Sparklehorse...
- 2) More local bands exposed - with a small but competent local scene, Bele Chere has much to draw from, but rock bands seem to be underrepresented in the ranks. I don't think anyone would mind a stage dedicated to local rock music. I'm not slamming bluegrass and/or oldtime stuff... it would just be nice to see more rock.
- 3) Basically the same thing, but look at who's playing the national festivals and get a few of the more happening bands to play - Flaming Lips, the Decemberists, Arcade Fire...

I do not know how these things are done and merely offer these as suggestions to bring the music side of the event into focus, there are enough jam, roots, and pop bands to go around, what will enhance Bele Chere is just a minimal tweaking of the music schedule to be more in tune with a rather astute listening audience.

Thank you,
Elzy Lindsey

From: Bill Rouser - Home [mailto:rouserw@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 7:34 AM
To: belechere@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: info@folkmooot.com
Subject: Forum 1/30/07

I did not attend the Bele Chere forum on 1/30 but saw the news later - one suggestion I would like to voice is that it overlaps with the Folkmooot International Day (Saturday) - I enjoy going to both but that is difficult - not sure why one of the two doesn't change to week before or after each other.

Bill Rouser
Black Mountain - formerly from Waynesville

From: Diane Jones [mailto:jone6619@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 8:46 PM

To: belechere@ashevillenc.gov

I would like to speak on behalf of a lot of folks as well as myself. The one thing we would like to see changed is that Bele Chere be moved to a cooler time of year such as May or October. We don't even bother going to Bele Chere during the day as well as a lot of our friends. The weather in July is too hot and muggy. We really think attendance would be up if the festival were moved to May or October. The last weekend in May or October would be wonderful. Greenville SC has their festival in May and it's great. Thanks Michael Jones

From: Ann McMartin [mailto:annmcmartin@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 12:37 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov

My thoughts on Bele Chere would be to have more local representation in food, crafts, and entertainment.

Also make the festival smaller and more family friendly. I go to Fall for Greenville and really feel that is a better festival than Bele Chere. It has more of a local flavor and seems to draw a lot of families. Also all the music venues are free. All the stores along the street stay open as well, unlike Asheville merchants, so the merchants are able to take advantage of the crowds. I just think the locals are becoming more and more negative about the event and I have friends that even leave town during that weekend. Just some thoughts Ann McMartin

From: M33185S@aol.com [mailto:M33185S@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2007 6:51 PM
To: LBradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

Hi, Laura.
How about giving Bele Chere to another WNC downtown that needs the business? We don't need to attract tourists like we used to. I think we have plenty. Marshall? Burnsville?
Sherry

From: Mary Ann West [mailto:mrsmaewest@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2007 9:14 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere

Lauren,
Hi - Belle Chere reminds me of the words Belly Cherry.

I like Belle Chere very much and sometimes wish it would last a week. Can improvements be made to help the locals? Yes. We could have local food vendors, but I truly don't know if any of our restaurants want this task.

I care, but it is not on my hot plate as Prichard Park is. That is an easy fix that I intend to concentrate on.

Best regards to you,
Mary Ann

From: M33185S@aol.com [mailto:M33185S@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 8:36 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

As a downtown resident of 7 years, in town for each Bele Chere festival, I would ask you to consider shortening the amount of time the festival lasts. Also, keeping the participants as local as possible--artists, food vendors, etc. After 7 years, there really isn't anything I can say I like about it. The problem is the quantity, vast amounts of everything, for too long.
Sherry Luft

From: prc555c [mailto:prc555c@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 4:28 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I think Bele Chere has gotten way out of hand. It's much too large, too many music venues, too many people. The city should profit from Bele Chere...not lose money. 350,000 people in 3 days is way too much of an impact on our city. The litter, the uncontrolled noise, the drunken jerks....No alcohol on Sunday should remain as a family duty. It should continue but be half of it's present size. No more.

Thanks, Clayton Ludeman, 52 Biltmore Ave

From: PdKingNC@aol.com [mailto:PdKingNC@aol.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 2:23 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov; omporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Fitness Challenges at Belle Chere

I'd like to see more fitness challenges at Belle Chere:

Ask the Marines to put on a Marine Corp fitness challenge: Pull ups, crunches & 3 mile run. Post the results on a board by age and gender so people can challenge each other.

Ask the AFD to put on a fire department obstacle course challenge. Post the results by age and gender.

Ask the YMCA or YWCA to put on a fitness challenge/test. Maybe a 12 minute run/walk challenge ala Dr. Cooper's Aerobics program. Might be better to do it at the UNCA track.

Ask some of the local fitness clubs to set up fitness challenges: pushups, chin-ups, crunches or maybe even weight lifting. A four minute challenge with dumbbells is pretty easy to run: Using 10, 12, 15, 20 or 25 pound dumbbells: From a standing position, how many times can the person raise the dumbbells over their head, back down to their sides, down to their shins and then back up to their thighs? Looks easy, but is pretty tough. An even tougher one is to use one 30 or 35 pound dumbbell and take it from the ground to overhead as many times as possible in 4 minutes.

A rope climb would be interesting.

I believe there is a President's Physical Fitness challenge that could be used.

If these were done each year, it might motivate people to get in shape for them.

Thanks!

Paul King
Asheville, NC

From: John Ellis [mailto:jellis@dwtheatre.com]
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 9:30 AM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: Melissa Porter
Subject: Bele Chere

Lauren and Melissa,

I did not attend the open forum at the Civic Center earlier this week, and to be honest I was surprised that only 75 people were there. I felt I didn't have anything to offer as I represent a downtown business that simply closes and locks its doors at 5pm on Friday and then avoids downtown for the entire weekend. We are not able to present anything in the Diana Wortham Theatre that weekend (although some have inquired, not knowing it was Bele Chere weekend). It just wouldn't make sense to compete with the music on the street, and folks couldn't get to the theatre anyway.

About 2-3 years ago we began closing Pack Place for the Festival as we were nothing but a public toilet - we saw no increase in business and it was a nuisance to be open.

So I'm one of those folks who is dealing from impressions of the festival, with the most negative impression being that Saturday night is not a time I would want to bring my family downtown.

You do a tremendous job setting up the festival in a very short period of time, and when I do come back downtown on Monday the area is very clean - thank you!

So I guess I'd have to say - thanks for the weekend off - and thanks for Friday afternoon, the only time I do walk through the festival and eat food from local restaurants.

John Ellis
Managing Director

-----Original Message-----

From: don rawson [mailto:pineal9@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 6:19 PM
To: Steve Busey
Subject: Re: Bele Chere Public Forum

Thank you for the invitation to the Bele Chere forum but I was unable to attend- I'm sure many concerns/suggestions were made but I would only ask is Bele Chere a local festival or is it a money making venture for the City of Asheville? I ask because the two ideas are not always congruent with each other- as an entertainer who has played there and a resident of Asheville who has attended it for entertainment purposes, these are my observations:

1) Local microbreweries are not allowed to sell great beer brewed in WNC. Budweiser (yuck) products are exclusively sold. Can Budweiser (no pun intended) and sell Asheville area microbrewed beers.

2) Local merchants, artists and crafts vendors are far outnumbered by "out of towners" vendors selling merchandise in front of Asheville stores that are going out of business. Ironical eh?

3) With the exception of one or two headliners, Bele Chere should book local bands exclusively. The reason Bele Chere lost money with gated paying concerts is because nobody will pay to enter the gated area when they can simply hang around outside the fence and listen to music for free. Bele Chere used to be advertised as the largest free music festival in the Southeast. Is this still the case?

4) Sell alcohol on Sundays. Period. Unless Prohibition has been activated again there is no reason not to. Those who don't drink don't have to and more revenue is generated.

In short, it would seem that keeping with "local arts" only ideals cannot co-exist with corporate sponsorship which does not benefit Asheville. Sooner or later a decision has to be made- kudos on the Cherokee security staff by the way- it's good to see the real natives given the opportunity to be a part of our festival- I also loved the dog show- Thank you for allowing my input

From: Laurey Masterton [mailto:laurey@laureysyum.com]

Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 9:20 AM

To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov

Cc: 'John Cram'

Subject: from Laurey

Dear Lauren,

I'm sorry I could not make it to the forum the other night.

Bele Chere is awful for my business. The stage is just up the street and, just below us, the road is blocked off. We do NO business now during this festival. It is awful for us, a big money loser. And for me to be a vendor is prohibitively expensive, since that is not the kind of thing I am set up to do.

So I suggest thinking about making it smaller, unique (like it once was), a craft and local food and art and music festival. At this point I see very few locals here and, from what I hear, it used to be very different than this. I hope that we can return to an older style.

If I have more solution-oriented thoughts I'll send them on. Just didn't want you to think that my non-attendance indicated my compliance with things as they are.

Laurey C. Masterton
Proprietor
Laurey's: Catering and Gourmet Comfort Food
Asheville, NC 28801

828-252-1500
laurey@laureysyum.com

To whom it may concern,

My question how many cities would love to have 350,000 people for a street festival that generates 12 million Dollars for their city. Arrogance is the death knell for any business or endeavor, if Asheville is to good for their festival goers Then cancel the event.

Sincerely,
Lance - Southside cafe

From: tracyadler [mailto:tracyadler@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 9:00 PM
To: Lauren Bradley
Cc: mporter@ashevillenc.gov; VINPIANO@aol.com
Subject: Bele Chere

Per a notice from Jennifer Taylor, the City is asking for feedback on what we like about Bele Chere and What could be improved about Bele Chere.

One the of the things Bele Chere can 'take to the bank' is the well-oiled machine built by Melissa Porter and crew. Over the years they have created the infrastructure to pull off a well attended event. It's amazing how much support is drawn from the community and how much work the volunteer board and the paid staff do to get this festival off the ground each year. Even the best event on the planet wouldn't be a success if there wasn't a crew of people willing to make it happen. The City of Asheville has great systems in place and dedicated staff who can get the job done.

What could be improved? I think it's simply time to start using the festival to *promote downtown* instead of using as a way to *get people to come* downtown. Big difference.

People ARE coming downtown. But we want people - locals and tourists - to learn more about what the city has to offer in arts, entertainment, crafts, food and more. Bands from other cities across the country don't promote Asheville. Artists from Florida don't promote Asheville. Food vendors from Kentucky don't promote our amazing local food culture.

Instead of showcasing musical artists from all over the country, we could showcase our own amazing local talent. Instead of promoting artists from all over the U.S., we should showcase WNC artists and create a festival that makes the local art galleries actually want to stay open during the festival. We could open the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium and give free 30 minutes symphony concerts all weekend - because having them play on the stage in the new park won't allow people to see the Thomas Wolfe Aut. Same with the Diana Wortham Theater. People should be able go in and see a one act play, a puppet show or a musical performance. So many people don't even know that the theater exists. They'd be more likely to buy a ticket to see something at the Diana Wortham Theater later in the year...

We could have fewer food courts and fewer carnival food stands ... encouraging festival goers to go inside our downtown restaurants to eat. The vendors on the street could be 'WNC restaurants' or only sell booth space to local non-profits. Their website stinks but you should check out the Festival of the Arts in Grand Rapids Michigan to see how that city uses the festival to PROMOTE THE CITY instead of using the festival to draw a crowd. And they specifically require that all food vendors be non-profits...and those non-profits work hard to prepare for that opportunity every year and offer some amazing ethnic foods & such...

We could have stages that promote local amateur talent (not just music). It would be a smaller budget and we having amazing talent in our area. We could also have a stage that allows local arts to perform...like dance schools, tai chi classes, theater groups, etc. so that more locals would want to come to support family/friends.

Let's show everyone what Asheville and WNC has to offer. We have talent. And we have Melissa Porter and the Bele Chere team to make it happen. What a great combination.

Looking forward to watching this festival evolve along with the city...

Enthusiastically,
Tracy Adler

Cafe on the Square

From: mcannizzaro@bellsouth.net [mailto:mcannizzaro@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 1:09 PM
To: 'lbradley@ashevilenc.gov'
Subject: Bele Chere

Ms. Bradley,

As a downtown resident I was asked to email you regarding Bele Chere. I am a fairly new downtown resident so I cannot really compare the current Bele Chere to those of the past.

However, I do want to state that I feel that those of us who choose to live downtown are also "choosing" a downtown, urban lifestyle that normally includes events such as festivals (Bele Chere and others) as well as drumming, musicians and other lively events that come with noise. In no way would I expect the bands, musicians or other events to change because of me. One of the main things that attracted my husband and me to downtown Asheville was the "city environment." I do not want to see that change. If one wants to live in the suburbs or outside the city where it is quiet, they should do so.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cheryl W. Cannizzaro
Mr. Michael L. Cannizzaro
21 Battery Park Avenue
Unit # 603
Asheville, N.C. 28801
954-547-2027 (cell)
mcannizzaro@bellsouth.net

From: Jeremy Cook [mailto:jcook@championcu.com]
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2007 4:26 PM
To: 'Lauren Bradley'
Subject: RE: BELE CHERE

Thank you so much... I meant to add a comment about Bele Chere. Today at lunch we were talking about the changes. I don't think Bele Chere should be eliminated. But if you are wanting to make it more family friendly maybe cut the beer sales til after 6, and still no alcohol on Sundays. Just a suggestion, but I think if you take Bele Chere away your taking away part of my past away.

From: bernie [mailto:bernie@suloinc.com]
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2007 10:28 AM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere suggestions

- - **Belle Chere Suggestions-**

Keep the great Belle Chere festival alive subject to the thoughts below and THANKS for all the hard work and effort that goes into it.

1. Make sure the stage proximity doesn't crimp the retailers ability to do business (example of Pura Vida and the Double Decker Coffee Bus on Biltmore Ave.) like the stage at Biltmore and Aston. Move the stage a little farther south into the intersection so these businesses don't have to, effectively, close down during Belle Chere.
2. Make sure that the retailers are given the right to set up a table, at no cost to them, right outside their store or hugging the curb on the street side subject to where the Belle Chere vendors are setting up. Give the local retailers a chance to compete at Belle Chere because it is not a level playing field right now.
3. Make sure that a way is found for the festival to be a MONEY MAKER and not a money loser. With all the wonderful marketing minds in Asheville (which Belle Chere should tap), it should be an EASY TASK because of the motivation to come to the festival shown by the big crowds.

Thanks!
Bernie Byrne

39 C. Biltmore Ave.
Asheville NC 28801

From: William May [mailto:wemay@charter.net]
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 11:46 AM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Cc: Constance Esner; Fred and Kato Guggenheim; 'Judy Swan'; Larry Holt; 'Susan Griffin'; Trina and Patric
Subject: Bele Chere

1. What improvements could be made to Bele Chere?

I think the festival should be self-funding.

I am sure there are better ways to use taxpayers' money than a community party.

I think the accounting should show actual profits (none) for auditors' to review.

If a recent impact study showed Bele Chere contributes \$12.4 million in direct spending to Western North Carolina, has any other city been interested in hosting the event?

Let the people who live downtown have input about which events are under their windows. Maybe the loudest bands should be moved away from residential areas.

2. What do you like about Bele Chere?

I don't really like anything about Bele Chere. For those days of the festival, I would prefer to be out of town.

I live downtown. My parking spaces are confiscated for the duration of the event, and it is difficult to get to or from my home.

If I walk my dog, I am chased down by festival security (should he do his business inside for 3 days?).

The entrance to my building is crowded with people (some intoxicated).

The bands chosen for our end of town...Coxe and Patton always seem to be the loudest and latest.

Bill and Marion May

From: B.J. Snow [mailto:bjsnow@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 8:02 PM
To: 'Jennifer Taylor'
Subject: RE: Impact of Bele Chere Festival

Jennifer,

I have heard so many people say that they think Asheville should let Bele Chere go for a variety of reasons. I've only been to two of them, but I must say that I agree.

My two cents,
B.J. Snow
Phone: 828-628-4778
bjsnow@bellsouth.net

From: Katie J. Craig [mailto:kcraig@vwlawfirm.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2007 2:31 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere feedback

What I loved about Bele Chere has disappeared in recent years; it was once so locally oriented that it was fantastic! Now it's all about musicians from somewhere else, vendors from somewhere else, alcohol and money coming in from somewhere else.
I grew up here, and I was a member of the Asheville Symphony Youth Orchestra. We performed during Bele Chere at lunchtime one summer, and it was so neat to be surrounded by festival-goers and downtown employees on their lunch hour who listened, enjoyed and applauded.
As I got a little older, I looked to Bele Chere to see my friends' bands perform, and we danced in the street in front of the library, in front of Street Fair, enjoying what really was a celebration of Asheville.
As recently as 6 years ago, I had a friend performing in Bele Chere, and then suddenly, like magic, the local talent was no longer the focus of our festival.

If it's not about Asheville's performers, artists and cuisine, I don't see the point in having it anymore. Our festival should be by Asheville for Asheville.

Because of the alcohol sales, I won't take my daughter on Friday or Saturday. She's 9, and I don't want her exposed to beer sloshing all over her, tourists barfing up funnel cake in the streets. It's ridiculous and truly no fun.

Katie J. Craig
Information Technology Manager,
Van Winkle Law Firm
Phone 828-258-2991
Fax 828-255-0255

Mr. Eric Barber, Chairman
Bele Chere Board of Directors
August 7, 2006
5 Mayfield Rd.
Asheville, NC 28804

Ms. Melissa Porter, Program Supervisor
City of Asheville Parks and Recreation
PO Box 7148
Asheville, NC 28802

Dear Mr. Barber and Ms. Porter:

When my family and I moved here, we knew that downtown was where we wanted to locate our restaurant. I brought almost 30 years of experience with me when we, like so many others, became enchanted with the place and relocated.

After experiencing my fifth Bele Chere, my fourth as a downtown business owner, and after visiting with many of my fellow merchants, I had some thoughts about the event that I wanted to put before you. My intention is to start an honest dialogue about Bele Chere, which would result in improving the festival and conditions for downtown merchants/restaurateurs.

Twenty-eight years ago when Bele Chere was started, it was a brilliant way to bring young visitors to Asheville's rather moribund downtown. Now, more than a generation later, it seems to me that the festival has a negative effect on Asheville's vibrant, lively downtown.

My point of view is that Bele Chere has become a venue by which the city "rewards" its year-round downtown taxpayers by effectively shutting down or hobbling many of those taxpayers and their employees financially for seven to ten days. Summer is the time that downtown enterprises build their cash reserves with visitor dollars; visitors who would very likely be in Asheville anyway. Renting a booth during the festival can offset some of those losses, sure, but it's more effort, expense and stress on the business owner. (Even when you win a "Best Overall" as we did.)

For my part, Bele Chere has run its course downtown and the concept needs and deserves to be re-invented. What I propose is that you, the Board, take a very serious look at:

- Moving the festival out of downtown. What about the River District?
- Holding Bele Chere at a different time of year. What about mid-September? In a conversation I had with a city official last year, I was told that data indicates a majority of the visitors to Bele Chere are a three-hour drive from Asheville. Easy enough even with school kids.
- Preserving the festival's authenticity by retaining Asheville/Buncombe County service providers exclusively for all Bele Chere services.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and other interested parties to present a more detailed perspective and assist in any way to keep Bele Chere a relevant attraction for Asheville.

Very truly yours,

Michel Baudouin
Bouchon
62 N. Lexington
Asheville, NC 28801
828-350-1140
michel@ashevillebouchon.com

cc: Mayor Terry Bellamy and Members of the City Council
Board of Directors, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (by e-mail)

From: markcwilliams@charter.net [mailto:markcwilliams@charter.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 07, 2007 1:33 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: bele chere

I want to add my voice to those suggesting a return to local roots. Bele Chere has become too big, and has long since stopped being representative of the community. For a city the size of Asheville, we have a wonderful food scene, and our craft brewing community is phenomenal. I would like to see all food and beverage concessions go to local establishments; if that means the festival will be smaller, then so be it. Also, Asheville has a good and growing music scene. There's no reason to look outside the region for talent. Lose the Budweiser and the roaming carnival/festival/fair concessions. Focus on the locals. Bele Chere's primary function should be to allow locals to celebrate Asheville, not to draw people from neighboring states to a ticketed event by a national artist. Speaking of which, it's not a free festival if any portion of it is pay-to-play; lose the ticketed events.

Mark Williams
Asheville, NC

From: barbmee@bellsouth.net [mailto:barbmee@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 07, 2007 2:53 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere comment

I really enjoy Bele Chere, and think it is a great asset to the community. I especially appreciate that you have an alcohol-free day on Sunday. I have nothing against beer being served at Bele Chere, and I am sure it brings in lots of money for lots of organizations. In fact, I appreciate that beverage sales seem to be used to support local community organizations. I just don't drink beer, and, to me, the folks who drink lots of beer aren't all that entertaining if you haven't had any. It's not health, or religion, or anything like that - I just appreciate a day that has no beer being sold by the festival organizers. I also appreciate that you thereby make a day that folks who do have health or religious or other objections to alcohol are welcome at Bele Chere, too.

Barb Mee
Barnardsville
626-3617

From: Jac Cichetti [mailto:jac.cichetti@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 07, 2007 8:15 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

I was not able to attend the public meeting regarding Bele Chere, so I thought I'd relate some thoughts in this manner.
I've lived in Asheville since first coming to UNCA in the fall of '89. Back then, Bele Chere was phenomenal. It was a small festival of free music that seemed marketed towards locals. I attended frequently and regularly in those years.
Since then, the festival has grown beyond its original scope. It was once acceptable, if not encouraged, to simply throw some refreshments into a backpack and enjoy whatever bands/activities you cared to attend; now, there are very strict procedures for the purchase and transport of alcohol, as well as the attendance of certain entertainment. It is no longer a celebration of Asheville, intended for the citizens thereof; it is now a tourist trap designed to lure outsiders into town to spend as much money as we (and the myriad outside merchants involved) can fleece off them.
In college I looked forward to Bele Chere as a chance to enjoy my new home; in years since, I've felt naught but dread for the festival's return, as well as the accompanying tourists, traffic, and nigh-invasive musical talent and merchants. For the past...5 years? 10?...I've

avoided Bele Chere like the plague; it is nothing but a noisy, smelly inconvenience in late July, restricting travel and business access within our otherwise enjoyable downtown district.

At this point, I fully support the general inclination to reduce the scope of the festival, perhaps even returning it to its roots as a celebration of the town for and by its citizens. Failing that, it would not pain me in the least to see the entire project dissolved. Thank you for your time, and for the opportunity to express my opinions.

From: zoe rhine [mailto:zoerhine@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 07, 2007 7:40 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere thoughts

Dear Lauren,
After reading Mtn. Xpress article, and always having thoughts, love and concern about Bele Chere, here are a few thoughts:

Regarding changing the month of the festival.
Assume this is not being considered for this year as my whole family has planned this year's summer vacation around the last weekend of July date. That would be my mother in Ohio, my brother and wife and daughter from Erie, PA, and my niece and husband and daughter from Boise, ID. All of them have planned work schedules and time off all ready. (My mother is 81 and would not miss a festival for anything and has been coming for years.)
It may be hard to judge how many people plan this event long distance. And the date is very established--worth considering in changing something long established.

What I have always loved the most about Bele Chere are the odd surprises that you run into as you happen down one street, or turn a corner. First in mind, is the long dragon one year; or the year Mayor Lenny Sitnick walked around in the over sized "Lenny Sitnick" character with tall hair; the street artists--musicians, magicians, dancers, mimes, the parachute jumpers, etc. Those are the highlights for me. I also loved the year recently with the neat, athletic activities--the strap you sit in and bo-ing up in....

I'll weigh in on the beer, as well. Won't touch a Budweiser, and Asheville IS home brews and they should be available. (In the same way we get to buy great food from great local restaurants.) I vote also for bringing it back to designated areas on Sunday.

I do like the idea of opening it to more areas, especially the Eagle Street area, though I'm sure it makes policing and everything harder. But it would be cool to think of having a Goombay-ish side to Bele Chere.

In closing, the more local in all areas--food, beer, artists, musicians--the better. It's a great fun festival that can only be made better with fine-tuning.

Zoe Rhine
Reference Librarian
Pack Memorial Library

From: Block Linda [mailto:lblockhead@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 07, 2007 11:08 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere Ideas

Random thoughts:

I like that people seem to come out of the woodwork. Usually the downtown social crowd seems rather white and middle to upper class. I'm happy to see during the festival that the African-American community shows up, especially in the evenings. I also see more teens than usual.

I'm a dancer so I look forward to diverse bands. I'd say salsa and zydeco seem to be the most common - both of which I thoroughly enjoy. I'd love to see a good swing-dance band or even a country two-step group to make even more folks happy. I love it all. My biggest suggestion is to find a way to create a level dance surface and preferably one that is not concrete. In the past, I've struggled along on sloped hot dark asphalt - "sloped" being the worst of the adjectives. Some shade and a level surface would be a great improvement.

Bele Chere seems to always fall during the hottest part of the year - it seems to be a running joke, it happens so often. I just read about merchants' suggestion to hold the event during a slower tourist time which I think is a great idea and could fit with moving to a cooler season. (I'm concerned with the huge turn over of businesses that I've observed downtown and I want to see folks succeed. The better downtown can do, perhaps the less strip malls elsewhere? Actually, I'd like to see more practical stores downtown, like a Staples alternative, a Lowes alternative, etc., but I suppose that's another subject.)

I enjoy the craft booths, especially those with affordable, unique items. I enjoy seeing local artists.

I don't know what the policy is now about street musicians but I used to play on the street and when Bele Chere came around, I wasn't allowed to be there. I don't have any sort of demo tape nor history of local shows but I'm a capable and enjoyed local musician. (I play the recorder.) Perhaps there could be a screening process for street musicians where they can show up and play (or dance) for 5 minutes and be heard. That process alone might eliminate anyone who wasn't serious but open the door for folks like me. Then, if allowed to stroll/play/dance for tips, we'd need to have space away from loud music stages.

Different goofy themes could create variety from year to year. Perhaps a children's parade to emphasize this theme. Anything to keep the event fresh.

Consider interpreters for major presentations/welcome speeches, printed materials, even advertising. (Spanish, Mondovian, sign language....) This at least acknowledges the diversity that does exist in Asheville and makes new comers welcome. Encourage diversity among vendors and entertainment - food, crafts, etc. (I know you do this to some extent already.)

Linda Block

From: Patreyno@aol.com [mailto:Patreyno@aol.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 8:59 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: (no subject)

I am responding to the city's request for input on the future of Bele Chere. (I spoke to you today - I'm the person who didn't realize it was an e-mail address, not a website!)

1. My husband and I looked forward every year, since it first started, to coming to Bele Chere, until about 3 years ago, when we realized it just wasn't fun any more. We now go to the August event in Burnsville, for several reasons.

a. Bele Chere is way too crowded. It's almost impossible to get around on the narrower downtown streets. And there's almost no place to sit down and rest.

b. It's extremely hot in July, and often rains, increasing the humidity level enormously.

c. I have no objection to beer sales per se, since I have occasionally bought it myself, but scattering the booths selling beer throughout the streets, while convenient for those wishing to purchase, makes for lines a dozen or more people deep, and they aren't always nice about letting you pass through.

d. There used to be many *local* art and craft booths, mountain made, but now much is from as far away as Florida, and a lot of things are pretty tacky junk. The only thing I have enjoyed in years is the juried art. When it's in the parking lot on Patton near the Drhumor building, it's hard to get to through the crowds.

e. The music used to be mostly local groups. Why pay high fees for out-of-town performers, which you lose money on, when the Take 5 section of the Citizen-Times is full of news about local musicians, who would love to be performing here where they live?

Suggestions:

a. Beer sales: Either go back to the old way of only selling it in the restaurants and bars, or put all the beer booths in one area. It would be a lot easier for the police to monitor who was getting out of hand. Also, this armband requirement to buy beer is a joke; as soon as a legal buyer has bought it there's not much way to see who actually gets it to drink. I've seen kids drinking beer that were obviously not 21 yet.

b. Quit putting it on in July when the heat is miserable. I agree with the people who suggested moving it to a time of year when local business slows down and could benefit. Cooler weather would be much better.

c. Split it into at least 2 festivals: the traditional Bele Chere type, in early June or September perhaps, when it's cooler. Do an Oktoberfest for the beer lovers. There are lots of leaf-watching tourists here then, and kids are in school.

d. Try to make it a showplace for LOCAL crafts and art, LOCAL food, and LOCAL musicians, or at least from the mountain area. It's beginning to look like Myrtle Beach at its worst. I don't really like to be run into by a kid waving cotton candy any more than a drunk slopping beer.

e. Send some observers to Burnsville in August to their fair and see why people go there.

The whole thing used to be like one big funky block party. Now it's too commercial, too hot, too crowded, the music is deafening, you can't get anywhere fast, there's no place to sit down and chill out.

Thanks for the opportunity to explain why we don't come anymore. I know other locals who don't either.

Pat Reynolds

From: John Root [mailto:roothoop@main.nc.us]

Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 8:09 PM

To: lbradley@Ashevillenc.gov

Subject: Bele Chere

I've got a few thoughts for you regarding Bele Chere to pass along.

-if we are using tax dollars to subsidize the for pay concerts then they should stop. If we are losing money to production costs let's get less expensive artists and make it free.

-I think that using local or regional beer is a great way to make it ours and not theirs(Anheuser Busch).

-More restrooms and more beer outlets! Waiting in line for 20 minutes to pee and then another 10 for a beer sucks! especially if you paid good money to see a concert.

-I'd also be glad to go at a different date either in the spring or fall to allow merchants to get a bigger bang when things are a bit slower.

All that said, I really enjoy the artist variety and quality! Don't change a thing in that department! I think we have a great thing right here and a few tweaks could make it even better! Thanks for your effort. John Root

From: Farm bellsouth [mailto:imladrisfarm@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 12:07 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

Hi!

I'm writing to comment on the push to "improve" Bele Chere. We've had great experiences with Bele Chere over the past several years, both as vendors and as downtown merchants in our own location. Bele Chere as it is organized now, does present a challenge in that it brings a different clientele into downtown. That challenge, however, is a *huge* opportunity, giving merchants access to customers that wouldn't otherwise set foot in downtown. We use Bele Chere as a chance to create long term relationships with customers - many of our Bele Chere customers become a permanent fixture, purchasing our product repeatedly over a time scale of several years. Unlike the typical downtown Asheville crowd, Bele Chere customers are very diverse (young, old, various races, various levels of soberness). This is also both a challenge and an opportunity, but one that we've leveraged well.

In short, complaints about Bele Chere's effect on business have less to do with the makeup of the festival and more to do with the willingness of the individual merchant to adapt and tap the potential of a great opportunity.

Please don't change a thing!

Walter Harrill
Imladris Farm
www.imladrisfarm.com

From: theemoryboard [mailto:theemoryboard@netzero.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 4:51 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere

Hello,

First off, I want to tell you that you have done a marvelous job over the years that you have been involved with Bele Chere. It is a shame that our politicians with all the things that they need to be attending too, and they are numerous and in dire need, meddle into something that needs no major repair. You were right on that the people of Asheville wanted to keep Bele Chere with some changes.

It has been said that most of the people who attend are from out of town. Unless you want to count Candler, Leicester, Fairview, Weaverville, Black Mountain, etc. as out of towners I don't believe they account for more than fifty percent and probably less.

The current date (July) is as good a date as anyone could want. Move it to September or the fall and you have families with children in school among other things families are involved in during that time of the year. Would lose the "out of town visitors" due to the same reasons and not nearly so much green would be pumped into the local economy.

Breaking into four separate festivals might have some merit but the general flow has to be maintained connecting these areas. Expanding the current boundaries of the festival would be a better idea.

As always the LOCAL issue comes up. It seems to me that the folks in this group want what might be called a free ride and NO competition. They have the Taste of Asheville which I believe is sufficient to take care of the food part. I would also think that putting all the local talent into one area would work very well. If that was what you wanted to see, fine. IF not, then you have other options. I want to say now that in expanding boundaries or making separate areas should not include the river area. BC is way too big for that and the Downtown After Five once or twice a year would fit in much better. Local artists and crafters deserve space but not to force out the other competition or

diminish the great offerings from outside the area that you and your staff has made into one of the finest aspects of the event.

Star power is what has always made BC more than just a local event. It always will unless the event is downgraded to just a local thing. I hope that we are able to have a broader vision than what is contained within our own area. Someone did and that what has made BC what it is today. I am not against change because it will happen whether you want it to or not. Life would not be interesting without change but it is not about changing for the sake of change.

Sponsorship would be a great advantage. Not easy to accomplish but well worth the effort. Sponsorship builds on success and exposure.

At least four Welcome Center/Guest Services areas at the main entrances into the festival would be a nice thing. Information services could also be include within these areas. There are many ways to entice folks into these centers but have have been wordy enough for one day.

A special thanks to you and your staff.

Bruce Emory

From: langrall [mailto:langrall@charter.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 10:54 PM
To: mporter@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Bele Chere Dance Stage

Hello, I understand the you are the person with whom I should share my thoughts regarding dance opportunities at Bele Chere. I am in favor of having an actual dance floor where people can dance to good live dance music. Over the past 10 years that I have lived and danced in Asheville, the presence of dancers at Bele Chere has steadily declined each year due to the lack of a decent place to dance to the music. A carload of us drove all the way down to Birmingham this past summer in order to dance at the City Stages Festival to a variety of live music there. They have a wonderful large dance floor set-up under a tent there. The dance community in Asheville is growing with lots of types of dance classes happening weekly. I think many dancers would be willing to give volunteer time in order to have a quality dance floor and tent during the festival. thanks , Liz Langrall, 45 Graham Rd, Asheville, NC 28805

From: Tres Hundertmark [mailto:tres@thelobstertrap.biz]
Sent: Friday, February 09, 2007 12:15 PM
To: lbradley@ashevillenc.gov
Subject: Belle Chere

Lauren,

I just wanted to say that participating in last weeks discussion on Belle Chere was quite impressive. The way the meeting was excicated was excellent and is a great model for such meetings. What I enjoyed most was the postitive attitudes, critically thinking of postive growth, development, and yes change.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to toss another half a cent in. On regards of sponsorship. Asheville has built an outstanding product in Belle Chere, and in a time when you can buy and sell just about anything on E Bay. I would venture that there are a lot of large companies that would more than make up the financial short falls that currently exist in the fesival.

Hope you have a fruitful retreat.

Regards,

Tres Hundertmark
Exec Chef/ General Manager
The Lobster Trap

350-0505